

UNDER THE CUBAN FLAG

OR

THE CACIQUE'S TREASURE

BY

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"TRAVELS IN MEXICO," "THE SILVER CITY," "MONTEZUMA'S
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SPANISH MAIN," ETC., ETC.

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CHAPTER I.

A TRAITOR TO CUBA.

"**H**ERE'S a pretty kettle of fish! Do you know what we've done, old man? Well, we've blundered right into a den of pirates, or filibusters, — it's all the same. And if the Spaniards catch us they'll string us up to the nearest trees. Blame my cats if they don't!" The speaker was a slight, blond-whiskered young man, with a shrewd, inquisitive air and reckless demeanour; his companion a tall, well-set-up individual, with erect, military bearing.

"Well, Doctor, it seems rather late in the day for you to be growling about dens of pirates, buccaneers, and that sort of thing. Why didn't you think of all this before we left Indian Key? The long and short of it is, you thought there was a good chance

to make some money out of the rebels, and you took it. You've nobody but yourself to blame; and then again, you can go back, you know."

"No, blamed if I will! I'll stay till the bitter end—that is, if it ain't too bitter; and so will the Professor, I'll bet. Hey, old chap?"

"What? Ah, oh, yes!" said the hitherto silent one of the group, a man of middle age, careless dress, and abstracted air. "Why, of course not! I shall not go back,—not till we've found those fossil crania and the Cacique's treasure of which we have come in search, you understand. They are said to be in a cave somewhere on Yunque Mountain."

"Crania be blowed! I guess you'll have all you can do to keep your own cranium intact and right side up with care, Old Antiquity. By the great horn spoons! that's all you think of—your plants, your fossils, and your bugs. Blowed if you don't get enough of the last when we strike a rebel camp. Ha, ha! we'll have bugs to burn, or I'm a sinner."

"Oh, shut up, Doctor," said the military man; "let the Professor alone. Here we are just through the reefs after a not very pleasant experience, and you growling like a bear with a sore head."

"Yes, Major Carrolton, and good cause for growling too. Supposing that pilot had made a mistake of a yard or two in his reckoning? Where'd we be now, eh, Major? Where'd we be now?"

"Oh, as to that," laughed the Major, "we should

now be perched upon some of those sharp-pointed coral prongs, wringing the water out of our clothes, — if we had any left to us.”

“That’s it, that’s it exactly. And the night dark as pitch, — couldn’t see your hand before your face; and that pilot just slams the old filibustering schooner right into the mouth of a reef not wider’n a house. It’s what I call flying in the face of Providence.”

“It merely shows, to my mind, that the pilot is a wonderful man, and that we made no mistake in trusting to his judgment. But, look here, friends; we can’t stay all the morning talking. Don’t you see the schooner has half her cargo out already, and that daylight is just breaking? Come, let’s get our luggage up and take the next boat ashore. Hist! don’t say anything about our plans, particularly of the treasure-cavern, for here comes the Cuban.”

“*Buenos días, señores*; this is a fine morning. Are you going ashore? Permit me to act as your escort, cicerone, or what you will; I am already acquainted with this section of Cuba. We have landed, you know, in the harbour of Nipé, on the north coast, but there is no town, no settlement, — nothing but forest and desolation all about, everywhere.”

“That’s sad,” murmured the Doctor. “I thought you, being well acquainted with the country, might direct us to a hotel, Mister Cubano.”

"Hotel? Caramba! there is no hotel nearer than at Baracoa, many miles away. If you get permission to sleep on the ground, with a pillow of palm-leaves, you will do well; and as for civilisation, — there isn't any: all is abandoned, in the hands of '*los barbaros*,' the insurgents."

"So you said once before, señor. But how is it you have such a good knowledge of this region? I thought you were a native of New York, and hadn't been in Cuba for years?"

"Well," rejoined the man, glancing furtively around, "it is true that I am somewhat of a stranger here; but I have a good memory. I can remember, for instance, that the bloody Cubanos murdered my father; that they destroyed our plantation and reduced my family to beggary. Those things I remember well, gentlemen, and do you not forget it. But, pardon: these things do not interest you; and oblige me by not mentioning the fact that I have spoken of them. I have enemies here, on board and ashore, and discretion is my cue. *Adios* till we meet ashore, when you may consider me at your service."

As the gray dawn broke it revealed the shore-line, only a pistol-shot away, and the morning breeze brought with it a fragrant gale from the dense forest beyond the shore. The placid surface of the land-locked bay was alive with boats, already laden with the cargo of the filibuster — great cases and bales of

guns, revolvers, ammunition, and all the paraphernalia of light field warfare.

An hour later the captain of the schooner announced his readiness to depart, and as the vessel's sails were being set and while her jib was fluttering in the wind, he might have been seen in earnest consultation with the leader of the Cuban company. The latter was a tall and muscular native of the island, dressed in linen shirt, duck blouse and trousers, with a broad leather belt around the latter, into which were thrust two revolvers and a machete. He was brown of complexion, bewhiskered like a buccaneer, and had black and flashing eyes which looked one through and through.

"Now, about those passengers," said the captain, speaking in low tones. "They *would* come over with us, and you had better take them along with you into the mountains. That old fellow with the smooth face and slouch hat is a professor of some sort in a college in the western part of the States; he is harmless enough,—only wants permission to study the natural history of the island, or some such fol-de-rol. That other man with the brown whiskers, and good-looking, is a military instructor in the same college, and has seen service in the regular army. There's something in him, and perhaps he may be of use to you; anyway, he has a letter from the Junta, recommending him to General Maceo; but I think, though, he is sent down here on secret

service by the President of the United States, to report on the exact situation ; so you'd better treat him as well as you can. As to that light-headed Yankee with them, he only comes over here prospecting for cash ; there's nothing in him but gas, and if he gets too troublesome, just turn him loose. But that other fellow who was talking to them a while ago is the one for you to watch, in my opinion. He pretends to be a Cuban, but if he isn't a Spaniard then I'm a liar. You see the one I mean — the thin, stoop-shouldered man ; he looked at you as you came aboard as if he knew you."

The Cuban leader inspected the stranger furtively from beneath his broad sombrero, and then said, shrugging his shoulders,—“Captain, I've seen him somewhere, and in Cuba, too. *Maria santissima!* Captain, can you wait for me to load my boats for the river voyage before you leave? If you'll wait till ten o'clock, you'll see an execution, just as sure as my name's Santos Gomez."

“So, Don Santos? No, I'm afraid I can't. Sorry, that's a fact ; but the tide won't serve at the inlet after nine, and I must be off right soon. But I'm mighty sorry to lose the fun. Can't you make it eight? Make it eight o'clock, and I'll wait."

“I'm afraid it is impossible, but I'll try. But as you know, I must load and despatch the boats first. The Spaniards have got wind of your coming, and may send a battalion to head us off ; so every hour

is precious. But I'll shoot that rascal, if I jeopardise the whole consignment ; there'll be one treacherous Spaniard the less before noon this day ! That's the man, Captain, who betrayed Felipe's band last year this time — all were shot, you may remember. Ah ! *Gracias á Dios* — Thanks be to God ! — he has at last fallen into my hands ! ”

The insurgent colonel glowered upon his prospective victim blackly, breathing hard and clutching at his machete convulsively. “ Well, Captain, a pleasant voyage to you. My thanks and remembrances to all the good patriots in Florida. You have the despatches to the Junta ? We shall see you, I suppose, two weeks hence, between midnight and morning ? Then, *adios*, — but you'd better wait : it isn't every day you can see a rascally Spaniard given his dues.”

With that the Cuban leaped into his boat awaiting alongside, and was pulled for the shore. The schooner hesitated a while, as if loath to leave, then gradually fell off before the land-breeze and sped away northward. Soon she had passed through the narrow inlet in the coral reefs, and the little bay, its glassy surface unflecked by any sail, was as desolate, to all appearances, as when Columbus first sailed into it, four hundred years ago. The three Americans and the psuedo-Cuban had left in a boat just ahead of Colonel Gomez, and arrived at the beach as he was hastening for the shore. They were strolling

through the sea-grapes that lined the beach when he landed. At first he gave his whole attention, apparently, to the loading of the boats for the up-river journey; then, when all had been arranged, he gathered a squad of his soldiers and sought the group of passengers.

Every man of the squad was armed with a repeating rifle; every man bore himself with an air that proclaimed unmistakably that he was bent on important business. It could not fail to attract the attention of the Cuban renegade, who turned pale beneath his jet-black moustache and looked for an instant as if he would attempt a flight. But a glance at his surroundings convinced him that such an attempt would be in vain, for he was hemmed in by pickets who had been posted in advance by Colonel Gomez. So he turned defiantly, and as they approached tried to look unconcerned. He engaged in conversation with the Doctor, as if quite unsuspecting of any intended harm to himself; but his remarks were interrupted by the arrival of the squad.

"Andres Machado," said the Colonel, "I have come to arrest you for crimes committed at the beginning of this year. You yourself know what they were and what the penalty. Soldiers, take this man out yonder into the woods, and await my arrival."

The renegade's face blanched, but he bore him-

self bravely. "Gentlemen," he said, addressing the three Americans, "I had hoped to be of service to you; but fate, in the person of Colonel Gomez, intervenes. So I bid you all adieu. Success to your mission; health to our friends, and confusion to our enemies. It matters little when or how I die, so don't attempt to save me: it would be useless, as Gomez long ago resolved on my death; and if it give him pleasure to know that he has good cause for killing me, let him hear me now say that I have committed all the crimes, as he chooses to call them, which he and my enemies impute to me. *Adios, amigos*, — good-by, my friends; come with us if you would see a murder done. Come: I would have witnesses."

The Americans joined in entreating Colonel Gomez to spare the Spaniard's life; but he steadily refused. "No," he sternly said; "no, not if my own brother were to beseech me; he has, on his own confession, — you heard it, — murdered some of my own kinsmen. Justice demands that he be shot. Men, bind the prisoner and lead him to that lone palm. Are you ready? Pace off twenty paces; wheel about; aim, — fire!"

One of the rifles contained a blank cartridge, all the rest were loaded with ball; but no one there knew who would fire the blank. The prisoner faced them stanchly, head held up, chest swelled out, eyes gleaming. At the word "Fire," he dropped like a

log to the ground, and there he lay, limp, lifeless, blood pouring from his wounds in streams. The soldiers stood at rest, their rifles loosely grasped, awaiting further orders.

“Attention, Lieutenant! march your men immediately to the boats. Leave the wretch where he lies; let no man go to him. The buzzards will have a feast to-night, provided the reptile is not too vile for them. Gentlemen, we are at your disposition; let us go.” Saying this, Gomez turned to the three Americans, who, dazed by the suddenness of their late companion’s taking off, followed him without a word.

This was their introduction to Cuba,—their first glimpse of Cuban warfare. It was a fitting prelude to the thrilling scenes they were to witness, and in which they were to take part.

The sound of firing awoke them from their abstraction. It came from the direction of the boats. The Colonel darted forward, waving his sword. “My God!” he shouted, “it is the Spanish battalion. We must fight, now—fight for our lives; the woods are alive with soldiers!”

CHAPTER II.

THE FIGHT IN THE FOREST.

ARRIVED at the boats, which were awaiting orders to push into the river, with their noses thrust up on the sand, the Colonel excitedly inquired the cause of the shots and the direction of the enemy. He was informed by the corporal in charge of the boats that there was no enemy in sight, but that two of his men had strolled into the forest and he had ordered guns to be discharged to attract their attention. The Colonel's rage was something to make his subaltern quake with fear; he bent before it like a tree before a hurricane, but when it was spent he rose calmly and inquired if he should now order the boats away, since the men had returned.

The Colonel glared at him a moment, too near to being choked with the rage that was in him to reply; but he nodded his head, and the order was given. He was ill at ease now, having done murder in cold blood, and doubtless repented it. Had it not been for the recent tragedy and its action upon the Colonel, it would have gone hard with the corporal; but as it was, he escaped the punishment

that his offence well merited; all hands leaped into the boats, and they were headed up the stream.

It was a dark and sullen river that cut through the beach and flowed out of the gloomy forest, narrow and deep. Leaning palms united their crowns above it, forming a water-tunnel between walls of living green, bespangled with flowers of every hue. The air was scented with the fragrance of these thousand blossoms, and in the sunlit interspaces danced innumerable butterflies, humming-birds, bees, and dragon-flies. Had the minds of the Americans been free to receive these nature-pictures, they could not but have been impressed by the beauty of their surroundings. But they were in no fit mood to receive impress from external appearances, for they were all dwelling upon the recent deed of blood and speculating upon the probable fate of any man who might come under the Colonel's suspicions. They now saw what a mistake had been made when they had placed themselves so unreservedly in his hands. They were committed to the Cuban cause now, however, and there was no receding. Whatever their previous convictions, they were now patriots perforce, as they had been unconscious filibusters.

Deeper and deeper penetrated the boats into the heart of the forest, and it was late in the afternoon — and the premonitory shadows of approaching night were flung across the stream — as a landing was made beneath the outspread limbs of a great

ceiba-tree. As the crews leaped ashore they were met by a body of men of soldierly appearance, but armed only with machetes. Augmented by this force the entire body of insurgents numbered not more than eighty men; but they all set themselves actively at work, and soon had the entire cargo out upon the bank of the stream.

Left to themselves, the three Americans strolled into the forest, each to commune with himself as to the future. It had become quite dark, and the torches and camp-fires lighted by the soldiers gleamed amongst the trees, when out of the dusk emerged the figure of the Professor with his hands full of plants, and with an alertness about him entirely foreign to his usual demeanour. The Major and the Colonel were in conversation on the outskirts of the camp.

"Pardon me," said the Professor, timidly, "I would not intrude; but it seems to me that the matter I have to communicate is of a pressing nature. Colonel, I wandered out into the forest some little distance, thinking that I might possibly find some trace of that rare orchid mentioned in the learned Señor Poey's monograph in the annals of the Royal Academy, and being intent upon my mission, I did not perceive the flight of time until —"

"Oh! Don't be so long-winded, my friend. Tell me what you saw." The Colonel was about to turn away, when the Professor detained him.

"Stay a moment, sir; what I have to say concerns you deeply."

"Then, in heaven's name, say it; time is precious my dear sir."

"Truly, as you say, time is very precious," continued the Professor, with most exasperating calmness; "but stay a moment, for what I have to say —"

"Oh, man, say it then!"

"Well, Colonel, as I was seeking for the orchid I stumbled upon a group of soldiers seated around a fire, and —"

"Soldiers, you say! What was their uniform? How many were there?"

"I could not well distinguish their uniform, except that it was quite gay as to colour, and entirely different from that of your men."

This might have been a bit of unconscious sarcasm on the Professor's part, for the Colonel's troop had no uniform at all, being dressed for comfort, — chiefly in dirty duck, and in what they could most easily lay their hands on. But he did not perceive it in his haste to get at the gist of his informant's story, and commanded him to proceed.

"There seemed to be many similar groups scattered through the wood, and as they fortunately had not discovered my presence, I concluded that discretion might indeed prove the better part of valour, particularly as I am by nature a non-combatant, — at least in this particular instance, — and so

silently withdrew and made all haste to acquaint you with these details."

"Oh! you did? Well then, your motto must be '*festina lente*' if this is what you call making all haste. But still, sir, I am indebted to you for the information. Excuse me, there is no time to lose. Kindly accompany me within the line of the camp." The Colonel had lost his truculent manner, probably through his amusement at the Professor's circumlocution, and had recovered his wonted air of confidence. Quickly making the rounds, he ordered all fires extinguished and every man to his post.

The Doctor and the Major consulted a moment as to the course they should take, and the result may be found in their actions. "These dagos don't know how to manipulate those new rifles, Major," said the Doctor, disgustedly. "Colonel, if you'll order some of those cases ripped open, we'll put the rifles together and teach your men how to use 'em. *Sabc?*"

"Gentlemen, you have saved our camp! Not one here understands the use of those new weapons, and as we did not bring arms along, relying upon these which were expected, we are in a nice little hole, as you Yankees would say."

"That's so, Colonel, if things are as you say. How in blazes did you expect to repel an attack of a full-rigged battalion armed with Mauser rifles and drilled down to a fine point? I don't see."

"Neither do I," frankly admitted the Colonel; "and if you and your friends will lend us your assistance, you will earn the gratitude of myself and my men."

"Oh, that's all right, Colonel. We didn't come down here to sit on the fence while there was any fighting going on, you just bet. So hand out those rifles, and while I'm putting 'em together the Major'll be instructing your men how to hold, fire, and load 'em."

"Colonel, pardon me, but have you sent out pickets?" asked the Major.

"Thanks, not yet, but I will at once. You must have seen service, Major, to be so alive to the situation. Were you in the United States army?"

"Ten years on the Plains fighting Indians," rejoined the Major, laconically. "But, pardon me again, the situation is critical; if you will detail me a squad of men, I will instruct them in the workings of the rifles."

The Colonel gave the necessary orders, and soon, by the light of carefully guarded torches, the Major was teaching the recruits how to manipulate the weapons. He first made sure that every man understood the rifle placed in his hands and had its magazine filled with cartridges, before he turned him over to a sub-instructor for such silent practice as the enemy might give them time for. This mode of procedure took much time, but it was accom-

plished a little after midnight, and every man of the eighty was in a way proficient in the use of the new weapon. Then, acting upon the Major's advice, the Cuban leader made a final disposition of his little force. Their movements would depend in great measure on the tactics of the attacking party, but of one thing the Cubans were certain—that they would never leave behind the arms and ammunition brought them by the filibusters, and which they had risked so much to obtain.

So the repelling force was formed with the big stack of boxes and cases as their base, while skirmishers were advanced to the picket-line and thrown out on either flank. In this order, with the river at their rear and the deep forest before them, they awaited the coming of the enemy. But the hours of the night wore away, and dawn was near before the first shot was fired. One after another the advance skirmishers came back towards the main line in good order, and without replying to the shots from their opponents.

The Americans were requested by the Colonel to retire to the boats, which were protected by the troops in front and the bank of the stream under which they were moored. But not one of them would budge a foot; each one of the trio sat fixedly on an ammunition-box, with a rifle in his hands and a spare one at his side, as alertly anxious for a part in the "scrimmage" as any patriot in the camp.

They had talked a good deal on shipboard about maintaining a "neutral attitude" in case of being involved in a battle; but this resolution was forgotten, now the critical moment was at hand. Their eyes gleamed dangerously; even the old Professor had a look of dogged determination in his face as well as a rifle in his hands and an ammunition-belt buckled about his waist.

It was hardly light enough to distinguish their forms when the foe appeared in the persons of cautious skirmishers. They were now firing at random, as if to feel the Cuban position, and their shots mostly whistled among the tree tops safely at a distance above the insurgents' heads, but now and then some "pinged" unpleasantly near. Soon strange forms were in sight, threading their way through the maze of trees and underbrush. Hidden behind a screen of ferns, the patriots waited till they could distinctly see the uniforms of their antagonists, then poured in a smart volley from their rifles. This warm reception was evidently unexpected, and the advancing line wavered a moment, then reformed again and pressed forward with renewed vigour, apparently undaunted. Very few of them had been hit, it seemed, and the Doctor and the Major, on their ammunition-boxes in the rear, fretted nervously.

"Confound their pictures!" exclaimed the Doctor. "Those Cubans haven't got the hang of the rifles yet, spite of all our coaching."

"That's so," rejoined the Major, biting at the ends of his long moustache; "stay here a bit, while I go tell Colonel Gomez to have the men hold low down and aim at their belts. The guns are new and bound to jump, firing such a heavy ball."

"And I go with you," shouted his friend as they ran to the front. They passed the word along, and their presence so encouraged the men that the next volley, at short range, was terribly effective. It seemed as though at least half the attacking column went down before that withering fire. But, as if rising out of the very ground, others took the place of the fallen, and under cover of the smoke formed and advanced again, with hoarse cheers and cries.

It should have been the Cubans' policy to have stayed right there and awaited the coming of the Spaniards; for with their repeating rifles they could have mown them down at will. But the fiery Cuban nature would not allow them to pursue this safe plan; they could not stand still and merely pump bullets into an enemy when he was hardly an arm's length away. "*Al machéte ! al machéte !*" shouted their Colonel, waving his sword in the air and setting the example by charging into the face of the coming column. "*Al machéte ! al machéte !*" rejoined his men, drawing their trusty blades, and plunging blindly forward.

"Well, of all the big fools !" exclaimed the Major and the Doctor in a breath. Their indignation choked them ; but they followed after all the same,

and soon were in the thick of the fight. The opposing forces seemed about evenly balanced, as the Spaniards were rapidly reënforced, and it was for a long while doubtful which side would win the victory. At last a great shout from the Spanish ranks proclaimed that the Cubans were giving way. Despite their commander's frantic appeals, — despite the example of the two Americans, covered with blood and grime and fighting in their ranks, — they sullenly fell back towards the river.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROFESSOR UP A TREE.

THE Colonel was left alone by this movement on the part of his men, supported only by the Doctor and the Major, who all along had clung to their rifles, and about their waists had as many rounds of ammunition as they could well use. They loaded and fired with the regularity of machines, and with them on his flanks the Colonel felt as well bolstered as with his own men behind him. But the small group was espied by the Spanish commander as the smoke lifted a little, and he urged his men to the advance at double-quick.

"They are ours," he shouted; "take them alive if you can!" and he sprang forward with sword in air. He engaged the Colonel in personal combat, while the two Americans were beset on all sides and for the instant separated, borne down by the press of the enemy.

If the Cubans had made a mistake in advancing to the charge when they should have stayed in line, so the Spaniards committed a grave error in depending upon their swords and bayonets when they might have shot down the three at once. It was soon going hard with

the three ; the Colonel's sword was broken at the first onslaught of his antagonist, and he was at his mercy.

"Surrender !" yelled the Spaniard.

"Never !" rejoined the Cuban, defiantly.

"Then I shoot you," howled the Spanish officer, drawing his revolver and aiming it at the Colonel's head. Another second, and no power could have saved Don Santos ; but just as the Spaniard was about to pull the trigger, he threw up his hands and fell prostrate at the Colonel's feet. There was no time for investigation ; he was saved,—that was all Don Santos knew or cared at that moment, and snatching his foe's revolver, he again plunged into the now disordered ranks of the enemy.

The shot that had killed their commander threw the Spaniards into confusion ; they fell back a little, and this move encouraged the retreating Cubans. They again rallied, discarding the machetes and depending upon their guns. Before a withering fire the Spaniards wavered at first, then crumbled to pieces, and almost disappeared.

The Major and the Doctor had extricated themselves from their living prison, and emerged without a wound, still working their rifles like automatons, and yelling like fiends. They formed a rallying-point for the encouraged Cubans, who followed wherever they led, charging madly upon the now retreating foe, and pursuing them so long as a vestige of opposition remained.

It seemed an age; but the forenoon was not half spent when at last it became evident that victory was on the side of the Cubans. The Spanish force had melted away like the morning dew that had disappeared before the rising sun. Only their wounded remained here and there, singly and in ghastly groups, stretched beneath the tall forest trees, protruding from the ferns, and hidden in the thickets.

The bugler sounded the recall, and the weary fighters came straggling in, blood-besplashed, black with smoke, ready to drop with fatigue. Yet all were jubilant; all were animated with such confidence that it would have been impossible to stampede them again that day, no matter what the force that might be led against them.

Then followed the sad task of accounting for the missing comrades. When at last all had been mustered, it was found that more than half the force was killed or wounded. But at least three times their number had fallen before them. One hundred and eighty dead Spaniards were gathered and deposited in shallow graves, after the wounded on both sides had been attended to. Thirty-seven Cuban corpses were laid to rest with such ceremony as the time and occasion afforded.

"Another victory like this and we are lost," muttered Colonel Gomez, "for we have no force near to draw upon for reinforcement."

"Tight squeeze," chirped the Doctor as he picked

a bullet from his boot ; “ but ’twas a glorious scrimmage, by gosh ! Wouldn’t mind doing it over again if I could be sure of coming out O. K., would you, Major ? ”

“ Well, I don’t know,” responded his friend, who was washing the blood and powder-smoke out of his eyes. “ Fighting has been my trade, to be sure ; but I’ll always shirk it if I can. But no matter, Doc, whether one had been trained to fighting or not, he couldn’t have done any better than you did ; you fought like a tiger, and were as cool as a chunk of ice.”

“ *Diablo !* ” interjected the Colonel. “ And so were you, Major. You two were as good as a hundred men ; better, by the saints, if they lost their sand and sneaked back in the middle of the fight. I thought the day was lost when we three were left alone. But there is another account to settle yet. My life was saved, — saved by a shot from the rear, and as I come to examine the wound of my late opponent I find it was a plunging shot, as if fired from a height. It tore through his skull, and passed downward, coming out at the base of the brain. Such a shot could only have been fired from above. I don’t recall any angels who would take the trouble to interpose in my behalf, — any spiritual visitants, — although I know several earthly ones who would risk their lives for me.”

“ Well,” drawled the Doctor, who had been look-

ing up into the branches of the gum and mahogany trees over their heads, "I guess it was an earthly angel, all right. Just take a squint up into that big tree right over where we were sitting when the fight opened, and you'll see the 'heavenly visitor' who fired that shot, or I'm a gosling, — and he'll be a fallen angel too, if he doesn't mind. Just look!"

All eyes were directed to the trunk of a mighty mahogany, where, about thirty feet from the ground, astride a big limb, sat the Professor. He wasn't paying any attention to the doings below, however, as his whole being seemed absorbed in the examination of a vast collection of orchids and air-plants with which the limb was adorned. Through a pocket-microscope he was examining the structure of a flower which he held as if it were worth vastly more than its weight in gold and diamonds. His rifle was hung on a branch, and his cartridge-belt alongside it, while he was not only totally oblivious of either, but also of the gaping crowd beneath the tree.

There was a mighty shout, at which the Professor looked up, or rather down, with an expression on his face that indicated his disgust at being interrupted in his botanical investigations.

"Hullo, old man, what are you doing up there?" demanded the Doctor; and the Colonel and the Major echoed the question, "What are you doing up there?"

"What? Oh! why, I am investigating the peculiar aerial flora of this tree; and do you know, I've found that rare orchid of which I was speaking only last night. It's a great discovery, and well worth the deprivations attendant upon our coming here."

"That's all right," said the irreverent Doctor; "but what are you doing with that gun? Don't hunt orchids with a rifle, do you?"

"Gun, rifle? Oh, yes! to be sure. Why, I brought that along for protection. You see, I was left alone, in a sense, when you and the Major so recklessly plunged into the thick of the fight, and catching a glimpse of this orchid, from my position, I at once climbed up to inspect it."

"Just so," commented the Doctor; "and you didn't use your gun any, while the fight was going on, I suppose?"

"Why, yes, to be sure. I think I did fire a shot or two; not to seem as if I would shirk the encounter, you know. The desire to examine the orchid was overpowering; but when once I had satisfied myself that it was indeed a new one and what I had thought it, I turned to aid my friends in their struggle with the attacking Spaniards."

"Exactly," said the Doctor, "such a conscientious old saint as you are ought to be sealed up in a bottle. I suppose you didn't fire at anybody in particular, did you?"

"No, — no, not at first; but now you speak of it,

I do remember seeing our friend the Colonel in apparent peril, and so I aimed my rifle at his opponent. I trust the shot was well sent ; though it is far from me to desire to shed the blood of any man. However, in this instance it seems that I was justified, — if one may be justified in such a deed, — for it was either his life or the Colonel's, was it not ?”

“That it was, old man ; and the Colonel is waiting for you to come down to receive his thanks. He declares that you saved his life, and nothing will satisfy him but a hug and an expression of thanks.”

“Oh, really, Doctor, it was nothing, I assure you, nothing that any one of you wouldn't have done for me. Kindly ask him to refrain from — from embracing me, or even thanking me, for it was nothing at all.” The Professor shuddered at the prospect of a Cuban embrace, — perchance a kiss ; and he might have remained up in the tree till this time, if the Colonel had not (though unwillingly) declared that he would not press his demands. Then, quite reluctantly, and with many a longing glance at the forest of orchids over his head, the Professor slid down the tree-trunk.

The moment he touched ground, the Colonel darted at him and folded him in his arms. “My preserver, my saviour !” he exclaimed, bestowing a squeeze that nearly crushed the breath from his body. Then he released him, after imprinting a

heartily salute on either cheek. At first the Professor was dazed, and submitted perforce; but as his wits returned and he realised the full measure of his greeting, he became indignant.

"Look here, Colonel Gomez," he gasped, "if this is my reward for — for doing my duty, another time, by Jove, I won't do it, that's all! I — I almost wish I hadn't shot, sir; if I'd foreseen the consequences I would not have done so, rest assured."

He gazed about him defiantly, polishing his spectacles and feeling in his pockets for the precious orchids. Finding the latter safe, he recovered his equanimity somewhat; but still continued to look around as if in search of something.

"Well, what is it?" demanded the Major, who, as well as the Doctor, had laughed himself off his feet, and was sitting on the ground, holding his sides from sheer exhaustion.

"What is it?" repeated the Professor; "Why, I miss something; ah, it is my rifle and ammunition-belt. Where can they be, I wonder?"

"Well," answered the Major, "they *can* be almost anywhere; but, unless my eyes deceive me, they are hanging up in the tree where you left them, on a limb. But they're safe, don't worry; nobody will steal them."

The Professor looked up in a purblind fashion, and seeing them there, spread out his hands imploringly. "Well, I declare! Did I ever?" was all he

said. But he prepared to ascend the tree forthwith, when the Colonel stopped him, and commanded one of his men to climb up and rescue the abandoned articles. The Colonel had seen nothing at all laughable in the recent encounter, and was far from satisfied; indeed, he more than once seemed on the point of repeating the performance. But the Professor kept a wary eye out, and whenever he saw a tender expression in the Colonel's face, darted behind his companions, and put himself on the defensive.

The collecting and care of the wounded and dead consumed the remainder of the day; and far into the night torches flashed through the forest, illuminating the stern faces of the searchers at their tasks and the surgeons at their gruesome labors. The night passed without a renewal of attack, unbroken save by cries of anguish, the moans of the sufferers, and the muffled tread of pickets going to and returning from their posts. The next morning at day-break all was ready for a start. A supply-train of mules had arrived during the night by a hidden trail, and upon them were laden the arms and ammunition which had been brought by the filibusters. Meanwhile scouts had been sent out and the body of the command, so sadly shattered, was set in motion. Such of the wounded as could walk were sent on ahead, and the desperately hurt, both friends and enemies, were carried in hammocks slung between poles borne by the stoutest soldiers. Nearly

all the command were thus employed in fact, and but few left for guard duty.

All the officers and the Americans were mounted. All were well mounted except the Doctor, to whom was assigned a vicious, wall-eyed mustang. "Look here, Major," he said, as he rode alongside the latter, "say, I believe, — oh, be quiet, you old fool (now addressing his horse), I'll jerk the head off of you! Sit down, you old donkey, what d'you mean by standing up on your hind legs, hey? You want a run, do you? Well, here goes! Get along now. Whoop!" The Doctor dug the spurs into the mustang's flanks, and, in a moment, both man and horse were out of sight, lost in the dusk of the forest.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INSURGENTS' STRONGHOLD.

"SANTIAGO defend him!" exclaimed Colonel Santos, as the frantic mustang dashed past with the Doctor on his back. "He's gone straight after the Spaniards, and we haven't a man we can spare to follow him." Dropping back to the Major's side, he said, "The woods are still full of our enemies, you know, who, while not strong enough at present to attack us openly, or perhaps even to form ambuscades, are yet alert and on the lookout for stragglers."

"I don't think he's in danger," answered the Major, with a smile at the suggestion. "He is of the kind that always lands on its feet like a cat. To tell the truth, I would sooner think of him as capturing the enemy than of being made a prisoner. Wait a while, and then if he doesn't get back, and you can spare the men, look him up."

This was not said unkindly or thoughtlessly, but in the firm belief that his friend was fully capable of caring for himself. His gallant behaviour in the fight, and his skilful management of the mustang, had completely won the hearts of the rank and file as well as of the officers, and not a man there but

would have set out in search of him if the order had been given. But the Major knew that the Doctor's "outfit" of dental instruments was with them, strapped on the back of one of the "cargo mules," and that he would risk his life rather than that one of his beloved instruments should be lost. If it had been the Professor, now, with his habits of absorption and his blind inattention to surroundings, — notwithstanding his accidental *coup* of yesterday, — he might have consented to immediate search. That individual was now ambling along on an animal as devoid of any evil intention as himself, a "Winchester" hung at his saddle-bow, a botanical case over his shoulder, completely absorbed in the wonderful features of the woods around him. Now and then he would halt his steed, at the great inconvenience of his companions in that narrow trail, to observe some glorious flower, or to snatch a land-snail from the broad leaf of a wild banana. The soldiers were at first greatly annoyed, but they saw that their commander was disposed to be indulgent, and they also recognised the fact that he was of a different species from themselves. They had passed through these forests a hundred times, perhaps, and had seen nothing new or remarkable in them, but this man found something interesting in every vine-hung tree and thicket. They at last concluded that he must be crazy, and made signs to each other to this effect by tapping their temples significantly and

rolling their eyes towards the innocent object of their attentions. This, however, was about the best thing that could happen to the Professor, for, once let that opinion get abroad, and particularly if the enemy could get the impression that he was a lunatic, he would be free to roam the island without let or hindrance. The Colonel and the Major laughed at the manifest deductions of the soldiers; but they did not contradict them, and they also let the man of science have his way.

"It was always so with him," observed the Major. "We were in Mexico together, three years ago, and there the common people came to the same conclusion about him. They couldn't conceive of a man in his senses going about collecting birds and plants, and particularly insects."

"Yes, it is a common belief with the lower classes," rejoined the Colonel, "that an insane person is protected by God, and that harm will surely come to any who injures one. So, as you doubtless know, our good friend is safe anywhere, so long as he doesn't provoke the fire of a hostile before the latter ascertains his vocation. God guard him, I say! he is as modest as he is brave and inoffensive." Then a grim smile overspread his countenance, at some thought arising, and turning to his companion he said, — "But say, how about the neutral attitude' you and your friends were going to assume when you joined us? I trust it may not lead

you into difficulties with the Spaniards, but, if you will only continue in that way, we'll make a general of you, and, perhaps, give you control of one of the provinces."

The Major pulled his long moustachios, a habit he had when perplexed, and answered,—“Well, Colonel, you see that was a case of fight or turn tail, and, as the latter was not to be thought of, why, of course, we fought. But, you understand, it was only on compulsion, and we don't engage to do it again.”

“No, no, of course not,” rejoined the Colonel, hastily, but with another grim chuckle smothered behind his huge whiskers. “However, unless we keep you cooped up in our quarters, the occasion may occur again, and quite frequently too, for we are continually on the war-path and having almost daily encounters with the enemy.”

“‘Never cross a bridge till you come to it,’ is my motto,” answered the Major; “though not a very wise one, perhaps, from a military point of view. So when the time comes for a fight we will determine our course of action by circumstances.”

The Colonel said nothing, but he commented to himself,—“He is a handsome, soldierly fellow, sturdy and reliable; I wish we could secure his attachment to our cause. There is some mystery about his present mission, but perhaps his papers will show that. At any rate, he is not the man to divulge it till the proper time.” With which reflection he

urged his horse ahead and took his place at the van of the column.

It was then late in the afternoon. They had been constantly rising from the coast, until now, as occasional glimpses assured them, they were on very high land. A break in the surrounding forest now and then showed a great, table-topped mountain, and as the sun went into the sea they were climbing its steep sides, which rose precipitously from the forest-covered plains. Access to the summit was only had by following a path cut out of the ledges, just wide enough for one man or horse at a time. A slip of the foot might mean death by a plunge into the deep ravines below, and it was with exceeding caution and in silence that the ascent was made.

At last the whole troop was safely gathered on the table-top of the mountain, and final reports having been made to the commander, the men were sent to their quarters. The Colonel and his friends had indulged in the forlorn hope that the Doctor might have preceded them; but inquiry showed that he had not, and they met in consultation. As they gathered on the brink of the precipice, the report of a rifle far down in the forest startled them.

"I fear it is too late," said the Colonel; "he has fallen into the hands of the Baracca battalion of volunteers; they were never known to spare an enemy yet. God have mercy on him!" But he quickly assembled a dozen of his best men, fresh reserves

who had been guarding the fort, and giving them hurried instructions, sent them back along the trail.

Yunque, the mountain with the table-top, had been selected by the insurgents of the Eastern Department of Cuba as their headquarters and place of refuge. It has a history which begins with that of the island, for it was first seen by Columbus in 1492, and described by him as an important landmark. To-day it is equally well known to all the filibusters that seek the shores of Cuba, as its peculiar conformation and great height make it conspicuous far out at sea. Its Indian name of "Yunque," an anvil, was given from its general resemblance to that object. It was a holy mount in Indian estimation, and upon the face of a gigantic cliff they traced the features of their most celebrated chieftain, or cacique. On every side, save that at which Gomez and his men made their ascent, frowning cliffs guard the sacred summit of Yunque; here there is a narrow path hewn out from the rock, which gives precarious passage. There is one other trail, anciently used by the aborigines, but it is still more dangerous than this and only taken in desperate enterprises. At a height above the sea of nearly three thousand feet, overtopping the surrounding plains with their giants of the forest stretched like a sea on every side, we find a level plain of many acres covered with tropical vegetation. There are

fields of waving grass and corn also, and broad areas of pasturage for the insurgents' horses and cattle. Grouped in the centre of the plain, in the shade of mango, orange, sapote, and bread-fruit trees, are the huts of the Cuban rebels, around which happy children play, lithe and active, burnt brown by the sun, and as naked as on the day in which they came into the world.

As the returning patriots crossed the mountain-plain it was illumined by the rising moon; the air was cool and sweet; the scene breathed of peace, and peace only. Yet, around the verge of the plain, at intervals along the tops of the cliffs, were posted watchful sentinels, forming a cordon of protection. The Colonel and his friends slowly rode across the plateau, and halted beneath an immense ceiba-tree which spread its great limbs above a low-roofed house with a veranda on every side. As the wearied horsemen reached the veranda, two orderlies sprang to assist them to dismount, and led away their beasts to the stables. "Gentlemen," said the Colonel, "this is my house,"—and, following Cuban custom—"it is also yours. Pardon me if I precede you a moment to announce our arrival."

The two Americans waited at the door while their companion entered. They saw a pair of white arms gleam out of the darkness and enclose the Colonel's burly form in their embrace, and heard a sweet voice welcoming him home. After a brief interval,

during which the woman seemed to be tearfully expostulating and the Colonel trying to soothe her agitation, the latter turned to his companions outside.

"Lolita, darling, allow me to present two good friends of mine: My wife, this is Major Carrolton, an American come down to aid the patriot Cubans; also his companion, Professor Brown. Both, my dear, though without really intending it, have already been of inestimable service to me; and Professor Brown in fact saved your husband's life."

"This gentleman?" exclaimed the lady, leaving her husband's side and darting at the Professor eagerly. But the man of science was wary; seeing that another embrace was imminent, he dodged behind the Major, blushing furiously.

"No, no, my dear madame; your husband is mistaken. Go 'way, go 'way. Really, I won't do it again; on my honour, now."

The lady hesitated in mid-pursuit, equally astonished with the old Professor; then she joined with a silvery laugh in the merriment of his companions, who were shouting with glee.

"There, there, my dear, don't press your attentions the Professor doesn't understand the warmth of the Cuban nature; and if he and his friend feel as I feel, they would prefer a refreshing *bebido* to all the thanks you can bestow."

"Ah, yes," pouted the pretty wife; "it is the

same old story: 'something to drink' the moment you are arrived at home." But she clapped her hands, and at once a brown-skinned waiting-maid appeared, bearing a tray laden with glasses and a decanter, which she set on the table.

"There, my friends," said the Colonel, "step up and help yourselves, and then let me show you your rooms."

Following his directions, the two Americans were soon dressed for dinner, and when they emerged were welcomed anew by the Colonel and his wife, who conducted them to the dining-room, where they seated themselves at a large mahogany table bright with sparkling silver.

"But where's our little rebel?" asked the Colonel of his wife. "Where's Hortensia?" Even as he asked the question, the rustling of silk was heard, and following the glances of host and hostess, the strangers saw an apparition for which they were by no means prepared. A beautiful young lady appeared in the doorway, almost the counterpart of her sister, Señora Gomez, except that she was less portly, taller and more lissome, yet with a regal form; blue-black hair in a massive coil at the crown of a daintily-poised head; deep-gazing, liquid eyes, with long, curled lashes; a mouth like the heart of a red rose, teeth white as milk, and a complexion of cream and strawberries. Both sisters were clad in black; but while a brooch of brilliants flashed at the

throat of the matron, a solitaire of great size and beauty rayed the lace witchery upon the maiden's bosom. The gentlemen rose as she entered, the Americans were presented, and she was about to seat herself, when the Major, whose gaze was fixed admiringly upon her, suddenly clutched his chair and turned pale. Then, without warning of any sort, he sprang at the maiden and seized her by the throat.

CHAPTER V.

A LIFE TWICE IMPERILLED.

“*D*EMONIO!” ejaculated the Colonel, starting from his seat.

“The dickens!” exclaimed the Professor, staring at his companion with wonder in his eyes.

“*Ciclo!* heaven defend us!” murmured the Señora.

Had the Major gone mad? Was he suddenly bereft of his senses, that he should pounce upon an inoffensive girl like that? She had surely given him no provocation. She had appeared before them the personification of grace, innocent youth, and beauty when, without any token of displeasure, the American had leaped at her slender throat.

But in a word he explained the cause. Still with an iron grasp upon the fluttering lace on her palpitating breast he gasped, “A centipede!” Cries of horror greeted his ears from the others, but they could do nothing. They saw that he had the venomous creature within his grasp; they saw the pallor of the maiden’s cheek, the look of horror in her eyes; but they were helpless to aid her rescuer.

“A knife, quick! Cut off the lace beneath my

hand. I cannot let it loose, and the thing is stinging me to death!"

In an instant the Colonel had seized a knife with one swift motion he severed the handful of lace, and then the Major, with an imprecation, dashed the wriggling centipede to the floor and ground it beneath the heel of his boot.

"It was a monster, full six inches in length," panted the Major. "I saw it moving amongst the folds of lace; another second and it would have been on her throat. You must pardon me, for if I had not acted instantly it might have been too late."

"Indeed it would have been," declared his host. "But you risked your life, my friend. See, it has stung your hand in several places. Here, Anita, bring the ammonia at once, or it may be in vain. Lolita, see to your sister, she has swooned. God in heaven! But that was a narrow escape."

The Major was taken to his room, and his hand bathed with strong ammonia and bandaged, while a stimulant was administered internally, to tide him over the crisis. He made light of his wounds, and eventually, beyond a slight swelling of the parts affected, he suffered no inconvenience. But they all shuddered at the thought of the terrible result which would have followed the implanting of the envenomed fangs in Hortensia's tender throat, where a sting in so vulnerable a part would surely have been fatal.

When the Major returned to the dining-room, he found the ladies awaiting his coming. Señorita Hortensia, who had now wholly recovered, advanced to meet and thank him, alternately flushing and paling with emotion. Then they sat down again at table, and the interrupted feast proceeded. Of course there was much discussion of the late affair, and the gallant American was greatly embarrassed at the position he was in; but he disclaimed any credit for himself. He only seemed to feel keenly the apparent rudeness of his attack upon the fair victim of the centipede.

As for her, she was evidently struggling with mingled feeling of natural resentment at this invasion of her maidenly reserve and gratitude towards the invader. She ought to feel grateful, she told herself, and she was. But why need he frighten the life out of her by so suddenly laying violent hands on her person? Still, if he had hesitated, she felt assured the horrible thing might have frightened her vastly more, and after all he wasn't to blame. So she finally transferred the sum total of her resentment to the centipede — made a scapegoat of it, in fact, — and thus enhanced immeasurably her growing regard for the Major.

"That is a very pretty child," observed the Professor as he pulled off his boots preparatory to going to bed. "Pretty, and yes, one may say quite attractive; but —" He didn't finish the sentence, but

sat for a full minute, gazing abstractedly at the Major. "How is the hand, does it pain you?" he said at last.

"Yes, a little, and I feel some fever in my blood. But say, I wonder where the Doctor is now? He ought to turn up by this time."

"The 'Doctor'? Oh, ah, that flippant young man with the smattering of dentistry! True, he disappeared, you may say suddenly, but doubtless he will appear again in due time. He isn't the one to lose himself."

The Professor was the most amiable man in existence, but there was one thing he could not pardon, one sin the Doctor had committed: that was, he had addressed him—Professor Brown—with unseemingly levity, not to say familiarity, and had actually slapped him on the back one day, and called him "Old Hoss!" Hence the Professor's attitude of unconcern as to the Doctor's eventual safety and return.

But the morning came, and with it no tidings of the lost dentist. The men had returned who had been sent to look him up, but no wiser as to his whereabouts than the rest of the company. Three days went by, during which the Colonel was busy drilling his men, the Professor in studying the geological formation of the Yunque, and the Major in speculating upon the mysteries of womankind.

The Americans had been presented to General Maceo, to whom they gave their letters of introduc-

tion from the Junta, and who promised to forward whatever plans they wished to promote. He wished them to take up their quarters with him; but the Colonel would not consent, and so it came about that the two strangers became permanent guests of Don Santos and his wife.

Nobody knew how it happened, but suddenly, one afternoon as they were standing beneath a tree in front of their quarters, there appeared in sight a solitary horseman riding furiously. As he came near, they saw that he was mounted on a wall-eyed mustang; and so, of course, it could be nobody else than the Doctor himself on its back; for nobody else among the insurgents could manage that unruly beast with such consummate skill.

"Same old sixpence, you bet! Right-side-up-with-care every time. Thought I's lost, didn't you? No siree, not by a jug full." With such like characteristic salutations the recreant dentist reined his horse upon its haunches, threw the reins to a servant, and springing to the ground, wrung his friends' hands most effusively.

"How did it happen, eh? Well, it didn't happen at all. That old bit of concentrated deviltry just ran away with me, that's all, slap into the Spanish camp. Fact, I assure you. Sentry on duty yelled, 'Halt!'—prepared to shoot; old wall-eye kicked him in the stomach, and then he prepared for something else. Horse made for centre of camp, where

he halted so suddenly that 'yours truly' kept on for about a rod after he left the saddle. Picked my way back and claimed horse; was made prisoner on the spot; talk of shooting, hanging to nearest tree, etc., etc., because some soldier said he saw me loading rifles night before in rebel camp. General commanding told me to say my prayers, as my time had come. 'Let her come,' said I; 'but I can cure that toothache for you if you'll give me the contract.' He was holding on to the side of his face, which was swollen out as big as a cocoanut. 'You can? You will?' said he, suddenly taking a lively interest in the proceedings. 'I can,' I said, 'and I will, if you want me to! Let me look at your grinders.'

"He was suffering awfully; anybody could see that with half an eye. He may have had suspicions of me, but he was in such pain that he didn't seem to care whether I might kill him or not. So he let me get near enough to see what ailed him, and I located it to a dot,—an ulcerated tooth. I had my 'little-giant' forceps in my pocket, and while I was pretending to examine the tooth, I got a good nip on it, and then hung back for all I was worth. It came; you just bet it did! but the General let out a yell that brought all them dagos running at me with their rifles and machetes. But by the time they got there I was holding up the tooth, and the General, the pain having stopped, was the most



“‘HE WAS SUFFERING AWFULLY; ANYBODY COULD SEE THAT
WITH HALF AN EYE.’”

grateful man alive. He waved the soldiers off, and took me in his arms like a long-lost brother. 'What can I do for you?' says he. 'Nothing,' says I; 'Oh, yes, you might give me a shake-down for the night, and my horse a feed of oats.' 'I'll do it,' says he, 'and send you safely to your friends in the morning.' 'Thank you, General,' says I; 'but if it's all the same to you, I'll go along your way; they're no particular friends of mine, — only chance acquaintances, as it were.' I had to give him an earful of something of the sort, you know, to allay his possible suspicions.

"Well, they took me along to Baracoa, and it seemed 'sif they couldn't do enough for me. I found that there hadn't been a dentist in town for years and almost everybody had the toothache, and for two days I had all I could swing to. Made two hundred dollars cold cash, and only the 'little-giant' to help me. Fact, s'help me, Andrew Jackson! Well, to come to the pith of my yarn. As I was swinging in my hammock last night, I overheard the details of the nicest little scheme to break into these preserves that you can imagine. It seems that there's an old trail which the insurgents haven't guarded, or have overlooked in some way, on the east side of the mountain; and up this trail, about midnight, several hundred picked men are going to climb for keeps, and clean the whole outfit out in less than no time. And that reminds me: I want a

private interview with the grand cockolorum of this command. What's his name, — Maceo? Well, then, trot him out, and I'll fill him up with all the particulars."

Colonel Gomez appeared at this juncture, and having congratulated the Doctor on his return in safety, offered to accompany him to the General's quarters; first, however, insisting that he should come inside and take a little refreshment.

"Don't forget," said the Major to the Colonel, "that we want to take a hand in this scrimmage; I'm sure I voice the sentiments of my companions." The Professor nodded assent; the Doctor slapped his thigh, and declared emphatically, — "Bet your sweet life! That's what we're here for."

The Colonel thoughtfully regarded his guests a moment, then said, — "Very well, I'll accept your generous offers. The Doctor shall go with me as aide, and you, gentlemen, if you will kindly do so, may stay here to protect the ladies."

"A fine night for our *paseo*," shouted the Colonel lightly, as he galloped down the road and pointed at the moon, which had risen from its hiding-place in the forest, and now shone out, full-orbed and brilliant. The hours passed pleasantly, for the ladies came out after dinner, and played and sang Spanish love-songs till nearly midnight. Then, as no sound of conflict had been heard, they said "good night," and retired to their rooms.

Their two protectors took a stroll down the roadway, and had reached a mango-tree at some distance when they heard piercing shrieks proceeding from the interior of the dwelling. Running back with all speed, they leaped upon the veranda and through the open window of the dining-room, just in time to see both ladies being borne through a rear doorway, vainly struggling in the arms of two stout troopers in the uniform of Spanish guerillas.

CHAPTER VI.

AN ATTEMPTED ABDUCTION.

A THIRD guerilla stood guard to cover his companions' retreat, and as the Major sprang upon him, fired a bullet through his left arm. He had not time for another shot, for the American sent him to the floor, insensible from a blow on the temple. Then, striding over his prostrate body, he darted after the fleeing troopers, the Professor at his side. "Fire low," he cautioned his companion. "Aim at their legs; don't imperil the lives of the ladies."

Two rifle-shots rang out simultaneously, and the troopers plunged headlong, throwing their burdens to the ground. Before they could recover themselves their pursuers were upon them, with rifles levelled at their heads. Turning them back to back, their captors lashed them securely with a lasso brought them by one of the servants, and then turned their attention to the ladies. The doña was quickly on her feet, trembling, but unhurt; but her sister lay unconscious where she had been thrown by the rude ravisher in his fall. The soft moonlight

fell upon her face, revealing to the Major, as he bent over her, a beauty surpassing anything he had ever seen before, either animate with life, or the creation of sculptor's art.

"Is she dead? Tell me she is not dead." The matron bent over her sister in an agony of fear, appealing to the Major to revive her, to restore her to life.

"No, she has only swooned," he replied. "Allow me to carry her into the house and summon your maids with restoratives." He lifted the girl in his arms, and bore her tenderly back to the room from which she had been so lately torn.

The servants had dragged out the man he had felled to the floor, but as he was then recovering from the effects of the blow, his services were needed in the outer room. With their assistance he bound him securely, then bethought him of the Professor and his captures, and was about to hasten to his aid, when Señora Gomez begged him to return to her sister. The doña was herself again, and fully competent to direct the servants at their work of restoring consciousness to the lovely girl. "But see," she said, with horror in her tones, "see the blood-stains on her dress. Oh, I'm afraid she was wounded; her gown is drenched with blood!"

At first glance the Major was as horrified as the sister; but as he stooped to examine the stains, he felt a twinge in his arm and at the same time a hum-

ming in his ears ; the room swam confusedly before him ; he tottered, grasped at a support, then fell upon the floor.

"Oh, señora, look, it is the gentleman who is wounded!" exclaimed one of the servants. "This is *his* blood on her dress. Poor fellow! he has fainted from loss of blood." The doña was at her wits' ends then, but had the Major's blouse stripped off and the wounded arm bound up ; by that time he was struggling to rise, thoroughly ashamed of his temporary weakness. As he assumed an erect position, Hortensia's eyes opened flutteringly, like a babe's just awakened from sleep, and the sister was again distracted, between joy at her dear one's recovery and concern at the Major's mishap.

"But it is nothing," he protested, modestly ; "nothing but a flesh wound. Let me go now, before your sister shall have become agitated over the sight of so many faces in her room."

He stole out carefully and totteringly, and sank into a seat for a moment, to regain strength to continue the combat if required.

Meanwhile the Professor was having a lively time with his prisoners, who persisted in their attempts to escape, until, assisted by a couple of peons, he got them into a strong room, where he confined them in company with their comrade. The leg of one was broken ; the other one had a wound that needed attention, but owing to their obduracy nothing could

be done for them until the arrival of the Colonel with help, or the passing of the night.

Nobody at the rancho knew how these three had evaded the pickets and reached a point so far from the bluffs, and, as their mouths were sealed as to their adventures and identity, the Americans remained in suspense throughout the night, not knowing but that a larger party of attack might be upon them any minute.

Throwing out pickets,—that is, posting several of the servants around the premises,—the two Americans sat on the verandas, front and rear, and kept watch till daylight. The noise of a terrific battle had been going on since the first moment of the attempted abduction of the ladies. At first it seemed well below the plateau-plain, as if the storming party were attempting an ascent. Then it came somewhat nearer—a rolling fire of musketry, with now and then the rattle of machine guns, the popping of revolver-shots; but never the boom of cannon or shriek of shell, because the insurgents had no heavy artillery. The moon was well in the west, and the flush of dawn was in the east, when the noise died away to a few scattering shots and desultory firing on the cliff-edge.

It was well along towards seven o'clock, and the heat of the tropic day was beginning to manifest itself, when a small body of cavalry, with dejected-looking horses and drooping riders, came within sight of the rancho. At their head was the Colonel, bare-

headed, with torn and bloody uniform, mounted on a strange horse which limped sadly. The Major, who was on duty at the front veranda, hastened to communicate the good news to the Doña, who lost no time in appearing at the door.

"You are not even wounded, dearest?" questioned the wife in anxious accents.

"No, darling, not a scratch; but poor old Diablero is gone, — shot from under me on the edge of the cliff. The buzzards are feasting on him now, I fancy."

"Ah, and you came so close as that and still laugh at death? When will the time come that we may lie down at night without thought of the terror stalking abroad in search of us?"

"When, indeed?" her husband answered wearily. Then he turned to the Major: "What is this? A stiff and bloody shirt-sleeve, arm in a sling, face pallid. What has happened, wife? Where is Hortensia?"

Señora Gomez hid her face in the hollow of her husband's arm, and shuddered while she said between her sobs, "She is safe, my own; but it is to our good friend here and the other that we are indebted for our lives." Then she narrated the story of the night's adventures, ending with, "And we owe it all to them, — more than we can ever repay, dearest, for indeed we could not have survived the disgrace of that abduction."

"I should think not," roared the Colonel, throwing one arm around the Major and embracing him. "Henceforth, friend, this house is yours ; no empty compliment,—I mean it. You have saved to me more than life itself ! And the Professor ?"

"Guarding the strong house, where the three men are confined. They are wounded, but still capable of stubborn resistance against only two of us. We have had no chance to dress their wounds. I fear —"

"Dress their wounds ! Ha, ha ! We'll dress their wounds for them ! After breakfast they shall have a taste of Cuban justice. Tomaso, here ! go relieve the American gentleman and ask him to come here. Look well to the strong house, mind you ; let no unhung scoundrel escape from it. Ah, there comes our faithful friend. One would not think, to look at him now, so carelessly strolling along the walk, stopping to examine this flower and that plant, an insect here and another there, that he had done anything meritorious in his life. My faith, but he surpasses me ; he is modesty and merit personified !"

Received by the Colonel with a hearty embrace, the Professor at first looked surprised, then bored, and muttering a few words of excuse, hastily retreated to a far end of the veranda.

"I wish," he said to the Major, who joined him there, "these Cubans were not so extremely effusive. One would think we had done something extraordi-

nary. Now there is that little girl ; she has recovered from her swoon, and is coming to thank you, her deliverer. Heaven grant she doesn't repeat the Colonel's tactics. I can't stand it ; indeed, I must retire !" With which ungallant expression the Professor leaped over the veranda rail and hid himself amongst the foliage in the garden.

At first sight of the lovely apparition approaching, her eyes sparkling, her red lips apart, a tender wistfulness shining in her beautiful face, her white hands outstretched, the Major's heart gave a great leap upward ; next moment it sank correspondingly in an opposite direction. He would gladly have followed his friend's example, and looked about furtively for some means of escape. But there was no opportunity for evading the coming encounter, and with a sigh he resigned himself to his fate.

Now the Major was no coward ; he had that contempt for fear which the trained soldier feels, that indifference to consequences which comes to one who has smelled powder on the battle-field and braved death in conflict with a savage foe. But here was something new to his experience, for he had never tested his courage before the battery of a lovely woman's eyes ! He had measured swords with desperate men, but had never crossed blades with a woman, in any sort of encounter whatsoever. The consequence was that he flunked completely ; you might have knocked him over with a feather

when the soft white hands sought and grasped his own and the tender orbs gazed into his, shining with excitement and glittering with tears.

"How can I thank you, my preserver?" she murmured in melodious Spanish. "You have again saved my life,—this time saved me from such a fate!" A shudder ran through her frame; her little hands trembled.

If only the soldier had been better versed in the ways of womankind, he would have seized and held the fluttering fingers, and have grasped the situation; but he did neither. He shrank, rather, from their gentle pressure, as if they might have been icy cold instead of warm and friendly. He flushed; he stammered; he stole a glance at the lovely face looking up into his, and then,—“Really, señorita, it was nothing; I would gladly do it over again.” He drew himself up stiffly, looking away over her head to avoid the allurements in those lovely eyes, and cast about for some mode of escape.

Abashed and confused, Miss Hortensia was about to relinquish the unsatisfactory attempt to convince her hero of her gratitude, when they both noted the rapid approach of a servant having an air of importance.

“Señor Capitan,” he panted, “the prisoners have escaped. They have killed Tomaso, and two of them have got away.”

Reaching for his rifle, which he now carried always

with him, the Major called for assistance as he darted through the house and followed after the man to the garden in the rear of the dwelling. He reached it in time to catch a glimpse of the twain running lamely through the high grass, and threw up his rifle, — but that instant they disappeared as though the earth had swallowed them.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ADVENTURE UNDERGROUND.

QUICKLY running to the spot at which the two guerillas had disappeared, the Major found nothing but a bunch of mesquite bush and a protruding hump of lime-rock. The long grass formed a rank growth around both, through which the trail of the fugitives could be traced up to a certain spot ; there it disappeared entirely. Groping in the grass for a continuance of the trail, the Major made a discovery for which he was wholly unprepared. His arm was suddenly plunged into a hole, through which his head and half his body followed so quickly that he nearly fell into the black depths beneath. His rifle alone saved him, being held crosswise of his body, and with its assistance he recovered his equilibrium and threw himself backward upon the grass, where he lay a moment to regain his wind.

“This explains it all,” he muttered to himself, — “shows how those rascals approached the house unobserved, — must lead to a cave or some passage having exit beyond the line of cliffs. It will be impossible for me to do anything single-handed ; I’ll go back for help.” Saying which, with many

a backward glance at the hole so ingeniously hidden, he returned to the garden, where he found the man who had guided him supporting the mortally wounded Tomaso. That faithful servant was too far gone to impart any information ; the remaining prisoner, the one with the shattered limb, would vouchsafe none, so the Major concluded it would be worse than useless to waste further time, and at once hailed the Colonel, then approaching. Taking him and the Professor to the clump of rock and mesquite, he pointed out the hole so neatly concealed. They brushed away the grass and found a passage large enough to admit a man, with some room to spare. No explanation was needed ; each member of the trio at once came to the same conclusion voiced by the Colonel : " We must get some torches, post men here to guard the exit, and find out what there is beyond."

His companions nodded. " We will go with you," they said ; " we shan't need many assistants. Get a dozen trusty fellows, well-armed ; and while you are gone we will stand guard." The Colonel at first protested, insisting that they should not further expose themselves ; but they were insistent, and so he departed in search of help.

In half an hour he returned with a score of stout soldiers, carrying, besides their arms, a coil of rope, torches of gum-wood, two knapsacks of provisions, and several flasks of water. Four of their number

were stationed at the entrance, while the others, one at a time, descended into the dark cavern underneath. The Colonel went first, despite his friends' expostulations, followed close by the soldiers, the Major and the Professor bringing up the rear.

At first the descent was through a narrow shaft, seemingly artificially formed, and almost perpendicular; then the cavern opened out to a large room with high, arched roof and walls of solid rock. Here the explorers gathered for consultation, examining the surroundings by means of the great, smoking torches. They first made sure that there was no recess or hidden nook behind or at one side of the cavern, in which an enemy could hide; then turned their attention to the small opening immediately opposite the entrance, which apparently led into the bowels of the earth. This was only just large enough for the passage of one man at a time, and the Colonel, holding a torch in his left hand and a revolver in his right, slid downward into the unknown darkness. Close behind him came the two Americans, each similarly equipped with torch and revolver, the soldiers closing up as their rear-guard.

As they progressed, the air became close and suffocating; but just as they were gasping for breath, the opening widened, finally expanding into a cave of vast dimensions,—the ceiling of frosted stalactites, and huge stalactitic pillars supporting it. These pillars divided the cavern into many spaces, each of which

was hidden in deep shadow, affording hiding-places for a hundred of the enemy, if necessary.

As yet, there had been no sign of any other living beings there than themselves, excepting the huge bats, which swept through the cavern with muffled roar of wings like the breaking of the surf upon the seashore. But in a far-distant part of the cave the Colonel detected a pair of gleaming eyes, and sweeping the nook with his torch, brought to light one of the former prisoners crouched beneath an overhanging rock. He was unarmed, most fortunately; for had he been armed it might have fared hard with his pursuers in their descent through the second shaft. At the sight of him the Colonel gave utterance to a forcible exclamation, in untranslatable Spanish: "You! you, Rubio! At last, eh? Caught like a rat in a trap, but caught!"

The wretched prisoner returned the Colonel's scowl of deadly hate with another equally savage and implacable, but said nothing. He was turned over to the soldiers and bound securely—still silent, but with that glare of hatred gleaming in his eyes. He was a young man of good shape and with delicate features, but with a stamp of evil in his face. He answered nothing when questioned as to his companion, but stared sullenly into space like a dumb brute at bay.

"Never mind," said the Colonel, "he can't be far

away. Is not that a gleam of daylight over there, through that narrow slit below ? ”

Investigation proved his surmise to be correct ; but there was no passage there, only a narrow opening through the rock. Further search showed a horizontal shaft leading westward, and through this the party made their way, leaving the prisoner with two soldiers. They maintained the same order as in their descent, and burst, one by one, into another cavern, even grander than the second, where the light was strong enough to bestow a twilight glimmer without the assistance of the torches. This light seemed to come through lateral crevices, for the ceiling, — a hundred feet or so above the guano-covered floor, — though gleaming with star-like stalactites, was impervious to external light.

As the details of the room came into view, it was seen that, aside from the immense central hall, or rotunda, there were many grotto-like rooms and niches opening into it. Some of these were hidden behind the stalactitic columns ; some entirely isolate, as though artificially hollowed for some purpose.

As the Professor was groping in one of these grottoes, scooping out the cave-earth that had been deposited there during long centuries, he suddenly uttered an exclamation that attracted the attention of his companion, the Major.

“ See,” he whispered, “ what I have unearthed —

an antique vase of clay! and here is another! And, by Jove! here are bones — yes, human bones!" The two Americans exchanged glances of intelligent understanding; they knew what these relics meant, and felt they were on the verge of some great discovery.

"Indian remains?" queried the Major.

The Professor assented. "Yes, my dear Carrolton; just what I've been looking for for years. This is a find of great importance. I shouldn't be surprised if we brought to light one of those crania after all." The Professor placed the relics back in the dirt for future investigation, and swept his torch about the walls of the hall. "Ha! As I thought! These lateral niches are artificial! Major," he continued in an impressive whisper, "they are the burial-places of the caciques, without a doubt. Wait here while I examine that tumulus beneath the deposit of calcareous stone yonder; it looks suspicious."

The Professor went into a remote corner of the cavern, far ahead of any of the group of soldiers and their commander, flitting his torch in every direction to disclose whatever the walls might conceal of archaeological treasure. Suddenly the light of his torch was extinguished, and out of the darkness came the sound of a tumble, followed by a scuffle, as of some living objects in combat.

The attention of all was then attracted in the

direction the Professor had taken, and they saw, coming out of the dusk directly toward them, the figure of a man, who sped past them and disappeared in the gloom at the lower end of the cavern.

The astonished spectators hastened after him, not knowing whether it was their friend or the foe they were seeking, and had nearly reached the small opening leading to daylight when they heard the report of a rifle or revolver burst with stunning effect upon their ears in the confined space they were in.

Hastening forward, the Major found another passage, leading outward,—a narrower one than those they had already explored. He made his way towards the ever-increasing stream of light which proclaimed this the entrance from the outside to the great cavern, and had reached a point where he could see the sky and the tops of trees.

At that instant he was saluted with a command, unmistakably in earnest, to halt, coming from a recess at his side. It was dusky therein, and he could not see who had given this imperative order; moreover, both arms were pinned to his side by the rocks on either hand. But twisting his head aside, he finally saw a face outlined against the dark rock,—a face which seemed strangely like an American's, but one eye of which was gleaming along a revolver-barrel.

“Stop right there!” said a stern voice; “another

step and you are a dead man! I've settled your chum I guess, and I'll plug you too, if you don't halt in your tracks!"

A thrill of joy shot through the Major as he heard this command, for it was given in his own language and not in Spanish. He lost no time in assuring the stranger that he was not a Cuban, and then wormed himself around until he got a good view of him. To his astonishment he saw that the sentinel was a youth, not over sixteen years apparently; but near him, quietly sitting on a crag that overhung the deep ravine, was a handsome man of middle age, in the uniform of an officer of the Cuban insurgents.

"Look out!" cried the boy. "If you make a misstep down you go, — more than a thousand feet before you stop too! Now, who've you got inside there with you? This is *my* cave, remember. Whatever you've discovered belongs to me and my friend here, by right of preëmption. I've been watching here ever since daylight this morning. What for? Well, that is my business — I mean mine and my friend's."

"*Es verdad* — it is true," confirmed the Cuban officer, smiling and helping the Major to a seat; and we wish you to note that you found us here when you came, for we have reasons for it."

"That I will do, willingly," answered the Major; "but for the life of me I can't see why you are so anxious to prove possession to a mere hole in the ground. However, that's your business, as you say;

let that go. May I inquire how you came here, and if you scaled the precipice below us?"

"Yes, indeed," replied the boy. "Of course you may. We climbed up by that trail. Take care that loose rock! Your foot might slip; and it isn't so safe to climb down as it is to climb up, you know. Yes, I fired that shot you heard; but it was a clear case of self-defence. The fellow came hustling out and I was in his way; it was either his life or mine. You can see him if you want to, hanging across that projecting rock, about five hundred feet below us. He's safe, — anyway, he won't do much more damage to anybody."

Looking cautiously over the edge of the precipice, the Major saw the body of the ill-fated guerilla caught on a jagged rock, a dozen greedy vultures already circling around him. Far below were the tree tops in the valley beneath where a noisy stream was murmuring, and in the distance gleamed the sea and the white walls of the port of Baracoa.

CHAPTER VIII.

OUR YOUNG AMERICAN HERO.

IN order to understand how this Yankee youth and his friend, the insurgent officer, came to be at the mouth of the cave when the Major arrived there, we must go back a few weeks and devote a couple of chapters to their adventures.

Archie Goodwin's father was engaged in the banana business at Baracoa, the ancient port at the east end of Cuba. His big fruit steamers made weekly trips every winter between Boston and Baracoa, bringing out provisions and machinery, and carrying back thousands of bunches of bananas as well as millions of cocoanuts. As Archie studied hard every summer, devoting at least half the year to his books in the schools up North, he was allowed to spend the other half, when most Northern boys are skating or coasting in the open air, beneath the palms of Cuba. He may have missed the more hardy sports of his birthland, but he by no means went without exercise. On the back of his wiry gray pony, "Chiquito," he made excursions everywhere about the district until all the Cubans there knew him at sight. As he was a sturdy young

fellow, with a smile and a greeting for all, and a brisk air of business quite at variance with the bearing of the native boys, he made friends wherever he went. And as at the time we make his acquaintance he had already spent three winters in the island, he of course spoke the language of the people with fluency.

He had hitherto been given unrestricted permission to range at will; but this season his father cautioned him not to wander far from the port, on account of the frequent descents of the insurgents from their mountain strongholds. They had been a year now fighting against the authority of the Spaniards, and had gained many successes, particularly in the interior. The Spaniards held all the chief ports of the island; but the insurgents possessed the hills and the mountains, many of the fertile valleys where the sugar-cane is raised, and the beautiful coffee estates. Now and then they swooped down upon the ports, secured supplies of powder and arms, and then swept back again as mysteriously as they had come. Although they had not committed any atrocities in the Baracoa district, yet their name was feared throughout the region, and Archie was as much afraid of them as any one else.

He readily promised his father to keep near the sea valley in which the town was built, and always went armed, with a light rifle at his saddle-bow, and a revolver in his belt. But he was deeply in love

with the study of natural history, and always alert for sign of any new bird, rare plant, or strange beast. So it happened that one day he wandered farther than usual, up a deep and gloomy ravine, where he had never been before. It was so dark and silent there that he went ahead warily, his hand on his revolver-butt, and his ears open for any unusual sound that should indicate proximity of the enemy.

He finally reached the head of the ravine, and was about turning back, when his ears were saluted by cries from the hillside above, which were preceded by a crash, as of a falling tree. They were cries of distress, calls for help, and the boy did not stop to consider whether they came from friend or foe, but sprang from Chiquito's back and scrambled up the hillside. He had not gone far when he came to a garden filled with palms, plantains, and bananas, interspersed among the wild trees still standing in the clearing, in the centre of which stood a small hut made of palm leaves.

But it was not from this spot that the cries had issued. Still farther up, among the yet unfelled trees of the forest, they led him, until he saw a man standing by the side of a fallen tree, his hand pinioned by a branch to the trunk. As his axe had fallen at a distance, he could not release himself; but when he saw the boy he gave a sigh of relief.

"Oh, but you are a boy! Still, do you think you can cut me out?"

"I think so," said Archie stoutly, and securing the clumsy axe, he attacked the imprisoning branches vigorously. They were large, and they were tough, for the woods of the tropical forests are mainly very hard and dense of grain, such as the mahogany, rosewood, ironwood, and the *quiebra-hacha*, rightly called the breakax. Finally, however, working under the man's directions, and after several intervals of rest, he had the satisfaction of seeing the branch give way and the great tree to which it was attached roll over with a crash. Springing quickly to one side, the man and boy escaped its sweeping branches, and then sat down and regarded each other critically.

The man was a strong and muscular mountaineer, born and bred in the interior of Cuba, to whom freedom came as naturally as to a wild animal. He had a pleasant face, shaded by a great brown beard, mild eyes, and a gentle voice. For clothing, he wore a homespun shirt and leather breeches, with a broad belt about the latter holding a big knife. Extending his left hand, — for the right hung mangled and helpless at his side, — he grasped Archie by the shoulder and poured forth a torrent of thanks, assuring him that he was at his commands for life; for, had he not happened along, he might have perished there in that lonely place.

Archie modestly disclaimed any credit for his assistance, but to divert the man from his effusion

of thanks, which were becoming embarrassing, he asked to be allowed to examine the wounded hand. He did so, and found that the wrist was apparently dislocated, besides several fingers being crushed.

"And there isn't a surgeon who would help, within forty miles," said the man, with a deep groan. "With that hand disabled how can I fight? It is my sword-hand too, and many a time has it wielded the helpful machete. I fear I shall never help the Cause again."

"Fight? The Cause? What Cause? Why should you want to fight?" demanded the boy. "Oh! ah, I see now! you are a rebel."

He drew back, and looked about for a way of retreat. For this was the first rebel, or insurgent, that he had ever met.

"Yes, if you like, a 'rebel.'" Archie's new acquaintance drew himself haughtily aside. "And you, — you are an American, I suppose?"

"Yes, I am, — a real Yankee, from Boston. My people have lived in the States for more than two hundred years."

"Ah, then perhaps some of your ancestors fought in the Revolutionary War?"

"Yes, indeed; my great-great-grandfather was one of the first minute-men to assemble at Concord to repel the British."

"Then he was what the British called a 'rebel,' was he not?"

"Yes, he was ; and I'm proud of it. Proud to be his descendant."

"Of course," said the Cuban, with a smile ; "and I — I am proud of being known as a rebel against Spain ; for, even as your ancestors rebelled against the unjust king of England, so my countrymen have determined to withstand the exactions of the barbarous Spaniards."

"Oh, yes," said Archie, confidently, "but there's a difference, you see." His acquaintance at Baracoa was chiefly amongst the Spanish officers who commanded the troop there, and he had heard only their side of the question ; besides, he was a favourite of theirs, and they had won his regard by many acts of kindness.

"No," replied the Cuban, gravely, "there is no difference at all ; for resistance against tyranny, in whatever land, is the duty of the people who are oppressed."

Archie was impressed with the truth of this statement, and had nothing to reply. Even if he had, he would have held his peace then, for he now saw that the man was becoming faint from pain and loss of blood. At any rate, whether rebel or patriot, this man was evidently honest and earnest ; and, moreover, his life was in danger. Archie thought quickly, and acted without further delay.

"There is a surgeon at my father's headquarters," he said. "He is a friend of mine, and I'm sure I

can get him to come up here. Of course it would be out of the question for you to go there?"

"Entirely," answered the Cuban; "I am, unfortunately, too well known. I am Lopez."

"Lopez!" exclaimed the boy, recoiling involuntarily. He had heard fearful tales of this rebel, the terrible Lopez, who, the Spaniards said, was a villain of darkest deeds who had murdered women and children, had burned their dwellings over them at dead of night,—in fact, had committed every species of atrocity.

"Yes," said the Cuban, sadly, "I am that same dreadful Lopez, hated of the Spaniards, upon whose head they have set a price. Now, perhaps you will hesitate before you promise to send your friend to me?"

"No," replied the youth, after a moment in thought. "No; if you can assure me that you have not been guilty of the atrocities your enemies charge you with. I can hardly believe that you have killed children and women, or have burned their homes over their heads."

"Neither have I," the Cuban asserted eagerly. "Against no innocent person whatever has my hand ever been raised. No blood has ever been shed by me, or by my men, except in open battle or skirmish. Yes, I confess to having burned plantation houses and sugar estates; but when they were used as shelters for our enemies, and their owners were

giving them assistance. I expect them to accuse me of these crimes, of course; but you,—you will not believe them?”

The boy looked into the honest brown eyes and earnest face, and said without hesitation, “No, I will not.”

They were now in the hut amongst the bananas and plantains. It had a mud floor and roof of thatch, but was neatly furnished with home-made furniture; around its walls hung guns, machetes, swords, and other weapons of the mountaineer.

Flinging himself upon a couch of leaves, the rebel extended his hand to the boy as he was about to leave, saying, — “You have saved me from a dreadful death. If I live, whether you return or not, I shall seek a chance to serve you. Of course I need not impress upon you that it would not be well for the Spaniards to know that you have met me,— that you have a friend in Lopez the rebel.”

“Yes, I know,” said the boy; “but I shall return, never fear, and bring my friend the surgeon with me.”

Two hours later, Chiquito bore his master into Baracoa. He was very tired; his flanks were heaving, his nostrils dilating, from the long gallop down the hills. Instead, however, of riding direct to headquarters, Archie took a circuitous path which brought him up behind his father's house, where he dis-

mounted, and hitched his pony out of sight from the soldiers. Then he made his way carelessly to the sitting-room, where, as he expected, he found his friend the surgeon. He was reading the paper that had come by the last mail, but he looked up as Archie entered, and greeted him with a smile.

"Ha, Señorito Archibaldo! so you are back from the woods again? What is it this time, a new bird's nest or an orchid that you want me to name for you?"

"*Doctorcito* (little doctor)," said Archie, falling into the familiar way they had of addressing each other in the Spanish fashion, "I have made the rarest find you ever heard of, and I have come to get you to go with me to examine it."

"Go with you? Pshaw! What does the boy expect of me this hot day? How far is it? If it is a long ways, I shan't stir a peg."

"It is pretty far; but you'll go, for I have promised that you will. The bird is badly wounded, doctor, and it may die, if you don't go."

"Look here, young man," said the surgeon, rising from the chair in which he had been reclining, "what the mischief have you done now? Is it another burrowing owl you want me to dig out? And what do you mean by saying you have promised? So it isn't a bird after all, eh?"

"Doctor," said Archie, gravely, throwing an arm

around his friend's neck and caressing his whiskers, "how much do the Spaniards offer for the head of the rebel Lopez?"

"How much? Why, let me think for a moment. Ah, yes; the latest offer is ten thousand dollars."

CHAPTER IX.

A CUBAN'S GRATITUDE.

“**N**OW, doctor, if you had a good chance to capture Lopez without fighting or any risk to yourself, would you do it?”

Before answering Archie's rather impertinent question, the surgeon looked about him to see that no one could overhear them, and then he replied, — “Would I? No, sir! Why, that man has shown himself a hero. In truth, I myself owe him a good turn for a favour he did me once.”

The little diplomat could restrain himself no longer. Seizing his friend's hands, he burst forth :

“*Doctorcito mio* (my little doctor), now is your time to repay it, for Lopez is badly hurt. He is lying in the hut in his forest-garden with his arm broken. Do come with me to set it for him. We can be there and back before dinner, if we start at once.”

The surgeon emitted a long, shrill whistle, but hesitated before committing himself to a reply. Then he said, — “But don't you know, my hot-headed friend, that if we succour one of those rebels we

make enemies of the authorities? at least, they will withdraw their protection to your father, if they do not make it very warm for all of us. "

"Yes, I know that well enough; but they need not be aware of our trip. We go so often into the woods together that they won't notice this time, I'm sure."

"That may be true enough; but if Lopez himself should inform of us?"

"Oh, but he won't. I could not think it of him."

"No, neither could I. Well, go tell Pablo to saddle my horse; and while you're gone I'll get my riding-suit and stick a case of instruments into my pocket. Get something to eat too; you must be hungry, after spending all the morning in the hills."

Half an hour later the two horsemen were ambling slowly across the clearing back of the town, apparently setting forth on one of their aimless excursions. But as soon as they were out of sight of the soldiers lounging about the barracks, they urged their steeds to a trot over the level spaces of the trail, and when the hills were reached kept them at a fast walk. Two or three hours later they reached the outlaw's clearing and found him in the hut, faint and dejected. He had bandaged the lacerated hand, but the pain was intense, the wrist swollen and turning black. He gave Archie a grateful glance, and submitted to the Doctor's examination silently, — setting his teeth hard when he

wrenched the bone into place, but giving utterance to no cry at the terrible pain.

"Not so bad as it might have been," said the doctor, cheerfully. "With rest and care the arm will soon be as well as ever. But you must have good and careful nursing. Haven't you any friends near, whom you can get to look after you a while?"

"Yes, farther up the mountains, at my camp; and I will go to them."

"Well, but have a care. It will be some time before you can swing a machete again, Captain Lopez. Meanwhile, I suppose we of the coast will have a rest from your depredations, eh?"

The outlaw smiled grimly. "Perhaps; but you know I have able lieutenants. But in any case you Americanos are safe; you shall be my special care."

"Let us hope so. Well, *adios*, my friend; we have dinner awaiting us."

"*Adios, amigos*; and do not forget, if the fortunes of war should give me victory, that you will always have a friend in Carlos Lopez."

He threw his uninjured arm around Archie, pressing him tenderly to his breast a moment; and as they mounted their horses, they saw him gazing wistfully after them, shading with one hand his eyes from the rays of the sun.

"A pretty pickle you've got us into!" said the surgeon, testily, when on their way home. "If the

authorities find it out, then good-by to any more concessions from them; we'll be banished, sure as fate."

Archie felt rather downhearted himself, but his conscience approved of what he had done, though he had no defence to offer. But nothing came of it to their injury, and no one at the coast knew, save Archie's father, of their adventure in the hills.

A month passed by. Archie made many trips to the forest, but neither saw nor heard more of the man he had succoured. He found the garden deserted, — the wild parrots eating the bananas, and the agoutis feasting upon the yams and sweet potatoes.

But soon there were vague rumours in the air that Lopez was alert and afield again, attacking the plantations and remote settlements. Indirectly, Archie had heard from him. Once, a wild-looking boy had brought him a pair of utias, sleek little animals, very rare, and highly prized by the natives. "From Don Carlos," the boy had whispered, and then disappeared.

One day a handsome young woman inquired for him at the door of his father's house, and when he appeared she handed him a small package, saying as she departed, "This is from Don Carlos, with his love for you and the Doctor."

Archie did not try to detain her, for he knew she was an emissary of the insurgents, and that the soldiers would imprison her if they suspected her mis-

sion. The common people all over the island loved "Don Carlos," and were his willing servants. They penetrated everywhere, into the very lines of the enemy, and there was no secret that the Spaniards could keep from his ears. He seemed to know all their movements beforehand, and was able to balk their designs. But the Spaniards were getting wary, and no longer permitted the natives to converse with the soldiers.

Archie took the present from Don Carlos into the house and showed it to his father. Removing the wrappings of wild banana-leaf and palm-bark, they brought to view a grotesque golden figure, about four inches in height, two inches broad, and an inch thick. His father looked at it carelessly and took it in his hands, but dropped it like a hot coal. He picked it up again though, and before committing himself to words examined it carefully; for he was a cool and careful man, slow of speech but sound in his conclusions.

"My son," he finally said, "where did you get this specimen?"

"From the mountains, father."

"Did you find it there? Can you go to the place and show me where?"

"No, father; it was sent me by Don Carlos."

"Ha, the revolutionist? So you still keep up the acquaintance?"

"He does, father. He seems to think that he is

indebted somehow to me and the doctor; but I haven't seen him since the day I first found him injured by the tree in the woods."

"Did he send any message with this?"

"No, sir, only his regards to me and doctor."

"But, look here! This seems to be a note, scribbled with banana-juice on a layer from a palm-spathe. Your eyes are sharper than mine; see if you can read it."

"It was then Archie's turn to be astonished, as he read, "Come to me, *Chiquitito*, and I will send you back with a thousand of these gods."

"Gods, father? What does he mean by that?"

"It is very plain, my son. Don't you see what this figure is meant for?"

Archie shook his head. "No, sir; only that is a very queer specimen, and it seems to be of brass or gilded. It isn't very attractive."

"Well, my child, it doesn't look its value, to be sure, but that queer object is worth its weight in gold; in fact it *is* gold, pure and unalloyed. It is some old Indian's image, made centuries ago, and worth more than its intrinsic value for its antiquity. It is one of the purest bits of gold I have ever seen native, and I was in California in '49, and have prospected for gold half over the globe."

"Oh, father, I'm so glad! Then all we have to do is to hunt up Don Carlos and bring back a mule-load of these golden trinkets."

"Not so fast, my boy," laughed Mr. Goodwin. "The risks are too great. I admire your courage, my son, but if you don't want to see the inside of a calaboose, you had better keep clear of any entangling alliances with Don Carlos. Please remember that we are within the lines of his deadly enemies, and working under their protection. Any indiscretion on your part would react upon me and my company, so it will be best for you to wait till the revolution is over."

Archie's jaw fell; but he saw the wisdom of his father's advice, and so put the golden image aside without another word.

About a week later he noticed a great commotion amongst the troops. Messengers were constantly arriving and departing, supplies were accumulating about the barracks. He correctly surmised that some expedition was in contemplation. In fact, the doctor said to him that night, — "This is in confidence, but I fear our friend the bandit is now in some danger of being wiped out. At daylight tomorrow the command is to start for his lair. They have discovered it on the summit of old Yunque; one of Don Carlos's men has betrayed it. This time I fear he is sure to be cleaned out."

The doctor spoke lightly, but his sympathies were with the insurgents; and as for Archie, though he said nothing, he could scarce swallow his supper. He went to his room and thought over the situation.

What was his duty? Was it to the Spaniards, who had always been his friends and who might easily wreck his father's business, or was it to Don Carlos, who was fighting for liberty and life?

What his decision was the moon might have told you, as it looked out from behind a cloud a little after midnight, and saw a youthful figure astride a pony about the size of Chiquito. It was soon lost in the obscurity of the forest, and the moon, discarding the cloud as a veil, vainly strove to penetrate the deep recesses of the tangled wilderness. Archie had yielded to his best impulse, and leaving a note for his father, had taken the trail to warn Don Carlos. He knew the trail to Yunque, where the insurgents were now encamped, and he knew that Don Carlos was now in command of a portion of the forces there.

As we have seen in the fifth chapter of this narrative, the Spaniards' designs had been penetrated by another American, who had done his best to warn the insurgents on the mountain of their enemies' approach. He had in fact arrived at headquarters by another path while Archie was stumbling through the darkness of the forest.

At last the boy discovered the precarious path that led up the precipice, and leaving Chiquito at the base of the steep cliffs, he ventured to climb up the dizzy height. As he neared the verge of the precipice, he remembered that the slightest mistake might be fatal; for he might be shot at sight as a

spy. So he drew himself very carefully above the plane of the mountain-top, and skulked low in the grass until he could see a sentinel on duty. Then he boldly rose and stood out in the moonlight.

"Who goes there?" challenged the sentry.

"A friend. I must see Don Carlos, — now — at once."

"He is here," a deep voice answered. "Ho! is it my young friend? Come in."

"Wait, let me tell you. A column of the regulars is now on the way to attack you. They have found out your retreat. Early in the morning, at dawn, they start. Even now they are on the way."

It was then between midnight and dawn. Don Carlos gave an order to a young man standing near. Clear and thrilling on the night air rang the trumpet-call to arms. Out from huts and caves tumultuously poured a band of men, and assembled at their chief's command. In a low tone he gave his orders; five minutes later not a man of the band was in sight — all were dispersed amongst the rocks and guarding the pass.

The chief took Archie by the hand and led him to the mouth of the cave, in a corner of which were a bed and some provisions.

"You must stay here until the fight is over," he said. "It is the only safe place. Yes (as Archie insisted that he wished to take part in the coming fight), you must; I cannot have you risk your life,

for I am responsible to your father. Wait, even if till noon, and I will return. And besides, the treasure is here of which I wrote you. After the battle we will investigate. Remember, it is yours, all yours ; for no one knows of it but me, and I give it to you, — my preserver."

And so, with a hug and a last wave of the hand, he was gone ; and the boy waited, all through that terrible fight, for his reappearance. Cannon and rifle crashed ; volley followed volley ; but he stayed there, obedient to his trust ; and about mid-forenoon his friend came back, covered with grime and blood. They were about beginning their quest for the golden gods, when interrupted, — as already narrated.

CHAPTER X.

THE CACIQUES' TREASURE-CAVES.

IT will be remembered that Colonel Gomez and his soldiers were left groping in the cave, in company with the Professor, while the Major went to the cave's mouth to investigate. As the latter did not reappear, the Colonel went out to ascertain the cause of his detention. As he reached outer air and saw the group on the rocks, he was struck with amaze to find the commander of the reserves, Don Carlos, chatting freely with the two Americans.

"What, Carlos, you here?" he exclaimed; and rushed at and embraced him heartily, Cuban fashion, for they were old companions-at-arms, and had withstood the Spanish on many occasions together, fighting shoulder to shoulder. "A glorious skirmish, wasn't it? But how came you here, eh?"

"Oh, I found it hot outside, and so came in here to get cool,—at least we were trying to get in when your friend here blocked the passage. But, Colonel, it seems strange that you never knew of this rear entrance to your rancho," Don Carlos added, in a mocking tone. "Now, right below us is a path leading up from the valley, over which a hundred men might have crawled, and right through

this chain of caves up to your very garden, just as easily as not."

- "That's true," replied the Colonel, "and two or three of the rascals did so. Why the whole company did not, I'm sure I don't know. I suppose, however, that they were afraid they might get stuck in the narrow places, in case they had to retreat. We captured them all, I think, with exception of the one below there, whom your young friend shot, I understand. But what is his name, Carlos? Present me to the little hero, that I may congratulate him on his bravery."

A general introduction was then gone through with, and in a few minutes they were all apparently as well acquainted as if they had been comrades all their lives. For a mutual danger and a common interest in a great cause make friends readily of those who have been strangers hitherto.

Archie and the Major were on good terms at once, taking a mutual liking to each other and as they were fellow-countrymen, they began chatting of affairs in which each had an interest.

"Well, Carlos," finally said the Colonel, "I must go back home. There are no more guerillas inside the cave, I fancy; and as my men are very tired from last night's fighting, we'll make our way back at once. Bring the boy up to my rancho when you get out, and let him make his home with us so long as we shall stay here."

Saying which, the Colonel entered the outer cave, and gathering his men together, proceeded on the homeward trail. He left with the explorers all the water and provisions as well as the superfluous torches, cautioned them not to stay too long, and then bade them adieu. The Professor was found in the grotto, from which he had routed the refugee, none the worse for his little scuffle, but entirely oblivious to all external sensations, for he had unearthed one of those precious aboriginal skulls which had been the object of his search and the subject of his dreams for many a month. He sat on the floor of the cave, gloating over his great "find" with the serene joy of the true antiquarian.

The Major touched him on the shoulder and he looked up, but with the merest gleam of recognition in his eyes.

"Look at that," he exclaimed, holding up the ghastly emblem of mortality,—"a perfectly silicified cranium, imbedded in this lime-rock many hundred years ago; one might call it petrified, so completely has the lime in suspension penetrated the osseous structure. It is absolutely unique; not another in existence, outside this cave. My reputation is made; I shall completely establish the truth of my assertions that"—then he saw that there were strangers with his friend, and apologised for his absorption in his subject.

Introductions followed, and then Don Carlos said, —

"Gentlemen, I shall be sorry to interrupt your excavations, but, as we have already told Major Carrollton, this cave and its contents are pledged to my young friend."

The Professor's jaw fell, and he gazed abstractedly at the skull, which he still held in his hands.

"But," added Don Carlos, "you are welcome to all the skulls and pottery you may find, on one condition, and that is that everything else shall be considered the property of this youth. Do you agree?"

"Of course," ejaculated the Professor and the Major, in a breath; "all we want are such objects as have archæological value. Since you were the first on the ground, — or rather, under the ground, — we shall be obliged to put up with what you may grant us."

"O Don Carlos" interposed Archie, "don't you see that our new friends are working in the interests of science? It would be wrong in me to deprive them of anything having a value as specimens."

"While that may be perfectly true," assented Don Carlos, "yet, as you know, I wish to enrich you, to repay the debt I owe; and this is the only way in which I can do it. So I shall insist, at least, that there be a fair division of the spoils. Even these skulls and this pottery are extremely valuable, for there are no others like them in any museum in Europe or America."

"That is so," groaned the Professor; "they are absolutely unique. But, sir, I beg of you, do not look upon these things with a merely mercenary eye. Consider their value to science, to the world of knowledge!"

"I shall," answered the Cuban; "and to show you that I trust you, come with me. You have not yet a full appreciation of the extent of the treasures this great cave contains."

Don Carlos thrust his hand in underneath a rock, and drew out an earthen vessel shaped like an ancient amphora. Giving the Major his torch to hold, he inverted the amphora, and out rolled a stream of golden trinkets, falling with mellow music upon the shelf of semi-translucent limestone. There were objects like grinning satyrs, beetles, tortoises, little gods with arms extended, heads of men and women, some with crowns and others with coils of golden hair. There were spear and arrow heads, some as broad as the palm of one's hand, and all of gold! Reaching in again, he drew out another earthen amphora, and out of this tumbled figures of golden parrots, fern-leaves, monkeys, — all nature seemed to be duplicated in this collection cunningly wrought out by the ancient aboriginal artists. When he had done, there lay before the astonished spectators two shining heaps of almost priceless treasures.

"Sir," said the Professor, when he had recovered breath, "these treasures are, in a sense, beyond

price. I am glad that you have a proper appreciation of them as specimens of aboriginal art, and shall hope to secure a series of them for the museum attached to the college with which I have the honour to be connected."

"As to that," rejoined Don Carlos, "you heard what I said respecting the disposition of this treasure. It belongs, so far as my interest in it goes, to this young man. You must treat with him for its acquisition." With that, Don Carlos relinquished, without even a sigh of regret, a treasure which would have brought at least fifty thousand dollars on sight, if a collector of antiquities could have seen it. Such generosity affected his hearers so that at first they could not speak. Then they chorussed a protest; but the Major offered the most sensible suggestion. It was that the Professor should be made trustee of the treasure, which should be shipped to the United States and, after a careful inventory had been made, sold to the highest bidder, and such disposition made of the receipts as Archie and Don Carlos should decide.

"Then," declared Don Carlos, "I say now that the sum realised shall be invested for this boy's benefit."

"And I say," rejoined Archie, "that, the others agreeing, it shall be deposited with the treasurer of the Cuban Junta, in New York, for the benefit of the patriot cause."

Don Carlos would not assent to this without a protest ; but it was finally decided that they would first secure the remainder of the antiquities ; and all day they worked at excavating, bringing to light at least a score of the ancient amphoræ, with their century-guarded treasures. And as for skulls and bones, even the old Professor, with his insatiable appetite for such like gruesome things, was nearly satisfied.

They transported the golden objects to a niche not far from the entrance to the first shaft, where they covered them with the bones, feeling sure that none of the superstitious Cubans would dare remove the latter to investigate beneath. When they emerged into outer air, the sun had already set, and dinner was awaiting them at the Colonel's table. They brought out specimens of the skulls and some of the earthen jars, which were gazed at wonderingly by their host and his family.

"Your discovery bears out the traditions of this region," said the Colonel, as they were discussing the probable origin of the relics, "which are to the effect that this mountain was the last resort of a powerful cacique, or Indian chief. The ancient Spaniards persecuted him and his people so terribly, driving them to labour in the mines, and murdering them on the slightest provocation, that this cacique finally gathered his people about him and proposed self-destruction as their only mode of escape from the terrible strangers.

“Whole groups of the miserable Indians went out into the forests and hanged themselves; but the last remnant accompanied their chief to this mountain, where they immured themselves in caves,—so the traditions state.

“But it is strange you did not find any gold amongst the relics. The old cacique was said to have had a vast quantity, in the shape of trinkets, jewelry, and native nuggets. Just before he took his people away from the plains where their homes had been, and fled to the mountains, he called them about him and explained what the Spaniards were after. ‘This is their god,’ he said, taking a handful of the gold-dust and grains and showing it to them. ‘For this god they commit every species of atrocity. If you have this yellow gold inside you even, they will rend you apart to get it. They will not be content until they have obtained every grain in our possession. Now, shall we take it with us, or shall we cast it into the sea?’

“Some say that the cacique cast all their golden treasure into the sea, fearing that the Spaniards would pursue him even into the other land, across the River Styx, to wrest it from him; but others, again, think it was taken with them to the caves. However, since you did not find any, of course the sea must have swallowed it.”

There was a sly twinkle in the Colonel's eyes, and his guests were quite uneasy, fearing that he

might have spied upon them. But as nothing more was said by him relative to the subject, they at last breathed freely.

It was when Señorita Hortensia, whose curiosity was aroused by the tale of adventure, expressed a desire to see some of those quaint trinkets that the Major's heart misgave him at the part he had played in the deception. He felt a pang at the thought of what he was compelled to deny her by the withholding of this secret from her, and Archie, whose sharp eyes had noticed the passing twinge in the Major's face, and pretty accurately guessed the cause of it, sought his new friend out after dinner and made a startling proposition to him. It was nothing less than that he, the Major, should present Miss Hortensia with one of the golden beetles!

"She will appreciate it, don't you know," said the boy; "and I'm sure she would appreciate it more from you than from me, because, you see, I'm only a boy, while you — oh, well, just you try it!"

The Major at first demurred, but at last consented, with the approval of his partners, to give Hortensia one of the golden scarabs. Each one of the discoverers had secreted several of the finest objects in gold about his person, to preserve them in case any accident should befall the collection in the cave.

And so it came about that Hortensia laughingly and gratefully accepted, from the hands of the Major,

as deputy of the party, one of the beautiful scarabs, — a beetle in purest gold, engraved by an artist whose art perished with him centuries ago.

But the young girl would surely have hesitated, had she been able to foresee that with that beetle she took her own and her dearest friend's fate in her hands!

CHAPTER XI.

A REBEL, IN SPIE OF HIMSELF.

THE Colonel's family were much taken with the young "Yankee," and particularly the Señora and her sister, Miss Hortensia. They would have had him remain with them, but Don Carlos, while willing to leave the matter to Archie himself, still was anxious for his guest to go with him to his own quarters. So they said "good-night" about nine o'clock, and wended their way to the other end of the plateau.

The main body of Don Carlos's little band was quartered in small huts of cane and grass; but near them were innumerable natural caves in the rock, to which they could retreat if hard pressed by an enemy.

"It has been an exciting day, my boy," said Don Carlos kindly, when they had reached his own hut, which was about twice as large as any one of the others, "and you must be very tired. Come, I will show you to your room at once. It isn't very large, nor finely furnished, but you won't mind that, I am sure."

"No, indeed," replied the boy, "anything with a

roof over it and surrounded with walls will do for me now, for I am very tired, somehow."

His host led him to a small room adjoining his own, and then left him to repose. It wasn't more than a minute before he was undressed and in bed, and five minutes later he was in the land of dreams.

Shortly after daybreak he heard the voice of Don Carlos calling him into outer air: "Come out, my little man, my maid says breakfast is ready."

As soon as Archie appeared he led the way to a spreading mango-tree, where, under its dense shade, a table was set out, a snowy cloth covering it, upon which were numerous dishes in orderly arrangement.

Seeing that the boy glanced apprehensively at his hands, the chief laughingly begged his pardon, and, summoning a black-haired and tan-coloured young girl, bade her conduct him to a spring, gushing out of a cleft in a rock into a gravelly basin ringed round with wild plantains, cane, and water-plants; thence escaping, the water ran in a murmuring stream, purling amongst the moss-covered and fern-hung rocks, into the depths of the forest.

The little brown maiden brought soap and a towel, and stood demurely by while the boy plunged his face into the crystal water, but ran away as soon as he emerged, fast as her little bare feet could carry her. She appeared so perfectly a part of the surroundings, so shy and fawn-like, that Archie romantically associated her with the spring and the forest,

and called her the Naiad ever after. She soon appeared again, however, in the character of Hebe the cupbearer, shyly holding out to him a green cocoanut with the tip chipped off, and containing a refreshing draught of cool, sweet water. Then he and Don Carlos fell to upon the viands spread upon the table, and ate like the hungry men they were. After drinking a cup of black coffee, Sanchez rolled a corn-husk cigarette and offered it to Archie, who declined it, saying that his father forbade him indulging in but a few things, but that was one of them.

"Yes, he is right," said his friend; "but our boys smoke as soon as they can walk, and I thought perhaps you might have acquired the habit. That may be the reason," he added musingly, "the Cuban boys are so small and feeble. Yes, it is better for you not to smoke. But you are eager for the news, are you not?"

Archie nodded. He was anxious to learn the details of the battle, yet his heart beat quickly at the thought of harm coming to his friends on the other side.

"Well, in the first place, few of our people were hurt, for they were all hidden behind the rocks. In the second place, only a few of the Spaniards were wounded, for they ran at the first fire, and left us a valuable amount of provisions and ammunition. I forbade my men to pursue them, because, poor beggars, the common soldiers were not to blame, —

they had to obey orders, — and again, some of the officers were your friends. So, you see, it was not much of a skirmish after all. It made a great sound because we fired off our rifles, which, reverberating amongst the rocks, made a terrible noise; but it frightened the enemy so they will not care to come back again in a hurry. As to the officers, they will take good care to make a good report, and, I have no doubt, by this time the papers of Baracoa are full of the news: ‘Another victory for our arms. The terrible chieftain, the blood-thirsty Lopez, attacked and routed in his lair! Dreadful losses among the rebels; the arch-rebel killed, his force exterminated; Spanish losses avenged; our flag asserts its supremacy; heroism of the noble captain, Don Ariosto Furioso,’ etc., etc.”

The rebel laughed, and Archie, now much relieved, joined him in his mirth, for he recognised the accuracy of his description of the Spanish reports of battles with the natives.

“Ah,” continued Don Carlos, “they are terrible fighters — on paper; but so long as we defeat them in the field I am perfectly willing their bombastic reports should go out to the world as Spanish victories. Why, they have had me killed more than a dozen times! At first, my friends on the coast and in the capital were overwhelmed with grief, but now, whenever they see another obituary notice of me, they only laugh, and say, ‘I wonder when they

resurrected Lopez again? He has more lives than a cat.' Yes, they are beginning to understand, our enemies, that they are fighting a hydra-headed defender of liberty. They may lop off one head, and another, but a score of patriots will arise from the blood-soaked earth for every one they lay low, to carry on this fight for freedom!"

His eye kindled, his dusky cheek flamed crimson; he strode off into the forest, to control his agitation. Soon returning, he said, "But pardon me, my boy, you have troubles of your own; I had forgotten."

"Oh, no, Don Carlos; I haven't any troubles, except that I haven't seen Chiquito since I arrived, and fear he may have been shot."

"Relieve yourself, then, of any doubts on that score, for the pony is safe, and ready for you to mount at any moment."

"Then, with your consent I will be leaving; you know the way is long, and I would like to get home before dark."

The chief came and looked earnestly into his face.

"Ah, that it is that I meant when I said you had troubles of your own. You cannot depart; it will be impossible for you to go back to the camp, either to-day or for many days!"

The boy sprang to his feet with a gesture of defiance. "What? not be allowed to go back? And who is to hinder me? not you!"

"Oh, no, my son; though, as to that, I would

gladly detain you ; but has it not occurred to you that the Spaniards will regard you as a spy ? You know the fate of spies, eh, my little son ? ”

Archie shuddered. Yes, he knew how the Spaniards served informers ; he had seen two of them stood up against a wall and shot to death. The scene appeared before him vividly — the blank, staring white wall ; the trembling men in front of it, a little ways off the soldiers drafted for their execution ; the puff of smoke, as the rifles sent their bullets on the message of death ; the shapeless, bloody mass, that had so shortly before been animate with life !

He sat down and hid his face in his hands. Don Carlos put an arm around him caressingly. “ It is not so bad, my son. There will be danger only in returning to the port. It is a poor return for your service, when you risked your life to warn us here, if we cannot defend you from our common enemy.

“ We are all your devoted slaves ; not a man of my band that would not lay down his life in your defence. But, you will see, we can only protect you while you are with us. Stay then, and soon all will be well. I have sent for your extra clothes and whatever else your father may think you would like. You have Chiquito with you, and you can range the forest as freely as ever. Not a person will harm you, if you keep on the mountain slopes ; for after this I shall have my pickets out all over

the region, and no Spaniard will dare ascend beyond the five palms."

"It is not that, Carlos; not that I should miss my rides and my freedom; but to have my friends at the port think me a deserter, an informer, a traitor to what they will regard as their own interests!"

Carlos chuckled, in spite of his real concern for the lad's distress. "Ah, if that is all, see now what I have done to prevent that! I have caused it to be made known in Baracoa that you were abducted, — yes, stolen by the terrible rebel chieftain, Lopez! Within two days even, I shall show you an account of the abduction in the papers, with a reward offered (by myself) for your recovery and for the bandit's capture, dead or alive! That, you see, will throw them off the scent. Instead of being known as an informer, a friend of the outlaws, you will be regarded as one who has unfortunately suffered for the Spanish cause!" The Chief chuckled again, and Archie opened wide his eyes.

"But my father, Carlos; what will he think? It will be no less distressing for him to believe that I was kidnapped than to think me an informer against his protectors."

"Indeed, *chiquito* (little one), that in sooth is true; but do you think I had not prevented that? My most trusty servant has already carried to him a message explaining all. For your father then, have no fears."

"But I would like to see him now and then."

"That you shall; he shall come to you whenever he wishes."

"How can he, when he will be watched?"

"How? Because I shall watch the watchers! All the natives, and half the common soldiers, are our friends; and the woods are alive with my trusty followers, as well."

"I am satisfied, Carlos; but what shall I do? How shall I pass the time?"

"Just now you must be content to idle here. Soon I shall have your books, your gun, — whatever you like, — for your diversion. Here, Juanita," addressing the little brown girl, who stood near, "show the señorito (little master) what the woods contain. I must be off to the outposts; we have important business ahead. Soon we intend to scorch the whiskers of the haughty Don, just to show him we are not asleep."

Juanita advanced and stood bashfully in front of the boy, tracing circles in the dirt with her toes. She was about eleven or twelve years old; but though only three or four years younger than Archie, she was hardly two-thirds his size. But she was lithe, active, and graceful as a kitten, with a pretty oval face, long, wavy black hair, and large mournful eyes. You would have thought, looking at her, that she was a very melancholy child; but such was not the case. She was mirthful and happy,

and with a demure kind of fun, which now and then sparkled in her bright eyes, that made her irresistibly attractive.

"What can you show me, little one?"

The boy was rather patronising at first, but he soon found that she was better informed than himself on some things, especially in the ways of the woods, and afterwards he treated her more as an equal.

"*No sé* (I don't know)," said Juanita, sticking a slender finger into her mouth and darting an inquiring glance at her companion. "What does the señorito like most of all?"

"Oh, I love birds and flowers, and — and everything in the woods."

"Then," returned Juanita, brightening up, "I can show you something. Do you know, I have found the prettiest humming-bird's nest, with the cunningest little white eggs! But perhaps the señorito doesn't care for such things?" she faltered, feeling she had been too bold.

"Yes, indeed. Let's go find the humming-bird's nest. Is it near?"

"Not too far, señorito; but follow me, I will show you."

She skipped across the brook, holding out her hand, which Archie rather scornfully rejected, and then wished he hadn't, when he saw her smile fade away and mouth droop at the corners.

"Oh, dear," he sighed to himself, "who would have thought a half-Indian girl would be that sensitive. I just hate girls anyway, and here I am tied down to one, — perhaps for months ; who knows ? If she were only a boy now, there might be fun."

She seemed to divine his thoughts, for she halted, stood a moment irresolute, then said, — "I see the señorito doesn't wish to go with me. He would prefer a boy. I will go and send my brother."

Archie sniffed. "The 'señorito,' as you call him, doesn't want your brother. You go along ; I want to see that nest."

She turned about dutifully and led the way, but with head drooping and listless attitude.

CHAPTER XII.

A LITTLE BROWN MAIDEN.

"THERE, there, little one!" said Archie, "don't feel bad about it. Of course I want you to go with me." At that she looked up gratefully, and seized his hand swiftly. Archie groaned, for if there was anything he despised himself for, it was this very thing of showing tenderness towards a girl, little or big. He prided himself on his stoicism, and would rather have been called almost anything than a "girl-baby."

They walked carefully through the tangled shrubbery until they came to an open glade — that is, it was comparatively open: the sun could now and then send a shaft through the tent of verdant leaves, flecking the brown earth with fantastic shadows. At a clump of curious, split-leaved palms the girl halted and pulled aside a drooping leaf. "There, don't you see the nest?"

"No," said Archie, "I don't."

She lifted the leaf carefully, almost tipping it up, and at the motion a sprite of a humming-bird sprang from beneath it and flew in their faces. The nest was plastered against the under side of the leaf —

a cup-shaped handful of lichens and cobwebs, with two eggs, small and white as pearls, reposing in their downy cradle. As the leaf fell back in position the nest was entirely concealed from sight, so skilfully was it attached to its overhanging support.

The mother bird resented this intrusion into her home affairs, and darted directly at their eyes with loud chirps of defiance. She was small but brave, and when her mate soon joined her, they united in another attack. It really seemed as though they would put out the eyes of the intruders with their sharp, needle-pointed beaks.

“Do you want the eggs?” said Juanita.

“Yes, I want them,” replied Archie, “but I haven’t the heart to take them away from such brave little tots; we may find others.”

“Oh, the others will fly at you just the same,” said Juanita, with a shrug of her shoulders that implied some contempt for a boy who didn’t know the ways of humming-birds better than that. They compromised by taking one of the eggs, and then went on for other spoils.

Hanging to some broad-leaved plants, they saw some gaily-coloured snail-shells, the owners of which were making slimy trails along the glossy green high-ways. These were a rare species, and the boy gathered a handful, intending to boil them out of their houses on his return to camp. A rustling of the leaves caused them to look down, and they saw

dozens of great land-crabs brandishing huge claws at them menacingly. Juanita sprang at them quickly, and soon had half their number lashed together with *lialines* (small vines). These, she said, were edible crabs, and she would bake them in their shells to eat when they returned.

They had now come to the banks of a roaring river which rushed between high walls of rock and over a bed in which it had hollowed out deep holes and basins. In one of these basins were scores of crayfish, looking like small lobsters, and at sight of them Juanita clapped her hands. "*Cangrejos del río*," she cried, ecstatically; "now there is something better to eat than anything else in the forests. If the señorito will go down the stream out of sight, I will get them for him."

"But how — how can you get them? The water is deep and swift."

"No matter," rejoined the girl. "Leave me alone till I call you, and you shall have something nice for supper."

"You won't run any risk, Juanita?"

"No, no! do as I say; go out of sight." A little flush had come into her dusky cheek; she seemed excited.

Archie went down the stream, behind a large rock, and waited. He staid quite still for half an hour, then he began to get alarmed. "Juanita," he called, "Juanita!" There was no reply for some minutes,

then he heard a cry coming from the river itself, almost at his feet.

Springing up, he darted down to the water. The stream had broadened here, and there was a wide basin with gravelly shore, where the water eddied just before plunging over a precipitous rock into gloomy depths. He saw a brown figure struggling in the water, with long, black hair streaming out upon the flood. It had been shot down through the chasm, and was caught in the eddy. A moment only it floated there; the next, and it would have been swept over the brink of the fall. He dashed into the water, seized the streaming hair, and bracing himself against a fallen tree, drew Juanita (for it was she), to shore.

She was on her feet almost as soon as he had landed her, laughing at his serious countenance, in which were expressed his fears.

"See," she said, holding out a hand, in which was a gigantic crayfish, wriggling in vain attempts to get free; "there he is, the biggest of them all. I was sure I would get him. You shall have him for supper." Then she wrung the water from her hair and gown and leaped up the bank, running back to secure the crayfish she had thrown out before they could escape.

Archie followed, his fears for her safety turning to anger at her indifference to the danger she had risked and just escaped. He gave her a good scold-

ing for putting her life in peril for such trifling things as a few crayfish. "And you promised me, too, that you wouldn't go into the water."

"No, señorito," she answered, gravely enough. "I did not promise not to go into the water; but I slipped, — I was so anxious to get that big one, and the next thing I felt was the great angry wave sending me out into the river. Yes, I know if you had not rescued me I should have gone over the fall. I am very grateful, master."

"Umph, you don't seem so," grunted that worthy. "Why, Juanita, if you had gone over you would have been killed."

"That is true," assented Juanita indifferently, "but what matters it? Nobody would miss me."

"But your mother, your father?"

"I haven't any, — only a brother. Yes, he might miss me, and do you know why? Well, only because he could not beat me, as he now does every night."

"Beat you? No, why should he?"

"Oh, I don't know; because he likes it, I suppose. See that!" She drew up the sleeve of her tattered gown, wet and drenched as it was, and showed him an ugly scar. "That was from the last one."

Archie gritted his teeth and clenched his fists. "He shan't beat you again, little one. If he does, he will have me to settle with."

Juanita looked up from her labour of catching

and tying together the crayfish, and for the first time she appeared interested. "Would you, would you really?" she asked with a smile that showed her white, even teeth. "But, no," sadly shaking her head, "he is ever so much bigger than you, and he is so very bad he might stab you."

Archie was nettled at her evident distrust of his abilities. "I don't care how big he is; if he dares to lay hands on you again, I'll thrash him within an inch of his life."

Archie never had thrashed any one within an inch of his life, but the phrase sounded large, and so he used it. It was very unfortunate that he did so then, for somebody besides themselves had heard it.

As Juanita rose from her sitting posture, with their catch of crabs and crayfish in her hands, and turned to bestow an admiring glance upon her champion, she suddenly cried out, "Why, there he is now!"

Archie turned; behind him stood an evil-looking boy some two or three years older than himself, his face distorted with passion. He was short but powerfully built, and from having spent his whole life in the open air, he was tough and wiry. He looked with contempt upon the young American, and finally hissed, "So you take my sister for your servant, dog of a Yankee, and you would whip me, her brother?"

"If you abuse her, yes." Archie was cool, but

he felt his cheeks burn and the blood quicken in his veins.

The strange boy made a movement forward and struck Juanita to the earth before either of the others was aware of his intention. She cowered there, trembling, but without uttering a word. Abuse was not a stranger to her; she was hopeless, seeing no escape.

Then he turned to Archie and made a pass at him, which the boy dodged and, before he could recover himself, landed a blow on his ear which sent him sprawling to the ground. Archie's lessons in boxing now stood him in good stead. The Cuban was up again, but only to receive another stunning blow; and finally, after a third knock-down, he lay a while, almost unconscious.

"Do you give it up?" asked the victor, as he stirred again.

"Yes," he muttered, after a pause.

"And you will not strike Juanita again?"

There was a longer pause; finally, "No."

"Then get up. Shake hands; we must not have enmity between us."

Archie was about to take his opponent by the hand, when Juanita shrieked, "No, look out; he has a knife!"

The warning was none too soon, for the desperate boy darted a thrust at Archie, which he only escaped by stooping. Then he rose and knocked him down

again, and this time he bound his arms, with Juanita's assistance.

"I am sorry, little one," exclaimed Archie, as they sat apart, wondering what they should do with their refractory prisoner. "It must have seemed very brutal to you, but what else could I do than knock him down?"

"What, indeed?" rejoined Juanita. "There was nothing else for you to do. But it troubles me that you should have got into trouble for me."

"Don't worry about that. He won't beat you any more, anyway."

"I don't mind that so much; I am used to it," said she, wearily. "We must leave him here, and if you tell Don Carlos where he is, he will send some men to bring him in."

At the spring they had the good fortune to meet the Chief, who listened with amusement to their story, and then gave orders to one of his men to go get the boy they had bound.

"I will see that he doesn't trouble you again," he said, "and as for Juanita, she must keep out of his way. Go now," turning to the girl; "it is late, and you must prepare supper for us at once."

The girl had resumed her wonted air of shyness. She was again the drudge, the servant to the Chief; she seemed to deprecate the idea that there had ever been any thought of equality between them.

Don Carlos led Archie to a hut, which had been

swept and put in order for his occupancy, and there showed him his choicest treasures, sent by his father by special messenger. There was a letter also, in which his father gave him some good advice — chided him a little for his rash adventure, but on the whole did not seem very much offended, and in the end acquiesced in the wisdom of his remaining with the rebels until it should seem safe for him to return.

As dusk fell about the valley, the table beneath the mango-tree was spread again, and Juanita came to invite them, not without a little air of triumph, to partake of the land-crabs and the crayfish which she had prepared, garnished with plantains, yams, and yeddos.

As they finished, the man came in with his prisoner. He was still sulky, and the Chief ordered him to be taken to the calaboose. "He shall be taught better than to insult and try to stab a guest of mine, to whom we are all indebted for our lives. Give him three days, Antonio, with nothing but plantains and water."

"Oh, no," interposed Archie; "don't punish him any more. It was not altogether his fault. Please set him at liberty; I'll answer for him."

"*Bien*, very well, then. You hear, *Félice*; this young man asks for your liberty. But if there is any more trouble, remember: if you lay your hands on him, or on your sister, I'll send you into the mines."

The lad said nothing, and slunk into the darkness, but not before giving Archie a look that betokened ill for their next meeting.

Two days passed by in quietness, except for the fact that all the men and boys were busily engaged in polishing up their guns and preparing for some anticipated journey.

Near the close of the second day, the Chief came to Archie with a newspaper, which he handed him, laughingly saying, "Did I not tell you they would chronicle another victory, in place of the defeat we inflicted upon them? See that!" He pointed to the head-lines of a long article, in which were set forth the daring deeds of the Spanish soldiers on their latest adventure into the mountains. "I am 'killed' again, you see," said the Chief, with a grim chuckle. "But I can't stay dead long; to-morrow we start on a raid into the lowlands. It is time those planters with Spanish sympathies had another glimpse of my ghost!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A MAID WITH LOVERS THREE.

HORTENSIA DELGADO, although but eighteen years of age, was a woman in every sense, mature and well developed, both physically and intellectually. And she had a full share of woman's curiosity; which being the case, it was only natural that she should wish to know whence her beautiful golden beetle had been obtained. But on this point nobody would consent to enlighten her; not even her brother-in-law and guardian, Colonel Gomez, though he had his suspicions.

The scarab had been prettily mounted as a brooch, by a private in the Colonel's regiment who had been a jeweller, and she now wore it at her throat, where it attracted more attention than either the Major or the Professor approved. The latter groaned inwardly at the loss of this rare ornament. He, however, was thinking of its antiquarian value, while the other was speculating upon the possibility of its being recognised, and leading to a search which might eventuate in the total loss of the treasure.

There was another mystery, also, which Hortensia and her sister did not share with the men, — the

identity of the prisoner captured in the cave. While she could readily overlook their reticence regarding the beetle, neither she nor her sister felt it to be fair that they should be debarred all knowledge respecting the prisoner. So they conspired together, one morning when the Colonel was away, bribed the jailor left in charge of the *calabosa*, and took a peep at the dejected young man confined behind the bars. The light was so dim in the thick-walled stone building, with its one narrow slit of a window, that at first they could not distinguish more than the outlines of a human figure, huddled together in a heap on the floor.

Lolita was the first to obtain a glimpse of his face ; as she did so she stifled a cry of surprise, and tried to take her sister away. But it was then too late, for she herself saw that their prisoner was no stranger to them ; and, as he raised his face to the light that came faintly through the doorway, she grasped the iron bars between them, to prevent her falling.

"Eduardo !" she gasped, while he, his eyes at that minute resting on her face, —

"Hortensia !" The young man drew himself to his full height, presenting to them a graceful figure crowned by a handsome head, with bold, black eyes, and long, dishevelled locks. "So you, — even you, — have come to gloat over my misfortune, to taunt me with my crime against my native country ? You might have spared me this, Hortensia."

"I, Eduardo? I did not know it was you confined here. And so you were one of those who tried to carry Lolita and me away? Shame, Eduardo! How could you consent to lend yourself to such a scheme?"

"Ha, ha! Lend myself? But what if it were my own scheme? What if I had determined to take you out of this rebel nest, away, away, and make you my wife? A priest was waiting in the cave; your sister would have been a witness. Another hour, — but for those Americans, — and you would have been mine, my wife, as once you promised me!"

"That could not have been, Eduardo; I would not leave my sister; I would not have consented to turn against my country. Never, never! I would have died first! What could have put that wild scheme into your head?"

The prisoner came close to the bars, his black eyes gleaming so wildly that Lolita seized her sister and drew her towards the door.

"What suggested that scheme to me? Say rather *who*? You; yes, you, my affianced bride, of whom I have been robbed by that designing villain, the husband of this woman, your sister, — your *dear* sister! But do not think you shall escape me. You see me a prisoner, at the mercy of that rebel fiend, Santos Gomez. To-morrow, perhaps, he may order me to be shot; it is in his power to do so. He had better, if he thinks to put you beyond my reach!"



"THE PRISONER CAME CLOSE TO THE BARS."

"No, Eduardo; he shall release you. But you must promise me to abandon this plan of yours, which can only end in disaster. Promise me, Eduardo. At least, wait until the war is over; and do not, meanwhile, take arms against our own beloved Cuba."

"And if I do, will you be true to me? Will you wait for me? Oh, Hortensia, it is not, as your brother-in-law assumes, your fortune that I am seeking. It is *you*, only you. I am no longer poor; I have discovered a wealth of treasure that will enrich me for life. I have only to put out my hand and grasp it, to have enough for you and for me."

Hortensia and her sister had retreated to the doorway, where the strong sunlight outside shone upon them. It illumined the fair face of the girl, and glinted the golden beetle at her throat. The prisoner saw it, started, clutched his own throat, and then said, huskily, fiercely,—

"Where did you get that brooch? Who gave it to you? Yesterday it was among the Cacique's treasures; to-day you are wearing it on your breast. Some one gave it you; who? Who was it? But no matter; the one who took that must have found it all! Oh, Hortensia, that was the treasure I had found,—upon which I depended for support! It is gone; you are wearing as a gift one of the ornaments with which I had hoped to endow my bride. All is

lost, for I no longer have any means of getting you beyond the clutches of those fiends. Go! Curses on you, on those who wrought this ruin! I will die now, rather than accept life at your hands! Death, death; you shall be the bride of death!"

Awe-stricken, with blanched faces, the two sisters crept out into the sunlight, signalling to the jailor to close and bolt the door, and ran swiftly to the house, only a few hundred yards away.

Once in her own apartment, Hortensia threw herself upon a couch and gave way to a flood of tears. Her sister tried vainly to soothe her, but was as agitated as she, and could only join with her in lamenting the unhappy issue of their visit.

Suddenly Hortensia sat upright, her eyes shining through her tears. "Sister, there is but one thing to do: Eduardo must be released and sent away. I shall disregard his threats; he would not harm you or me; but his brain is crazed, poor boy. Come with me. I hear steps, and think Santos may be coming back."

Her sister's tears almost froze on her cheek, for she had not contemplated the possibility of an appeal to her husband. He was good to her, and tender; but she knew him to be inflexible in the discharge of his duty. But she could offer no objection to her best beloved, and with a deprecatory shrug she drew her arm around the slender girl's waist and went with her to meet the Colonel.

"Well, what is this?" he said playfully, kissing his wife and tapping Hortensia on the cheek. "Agitated, tearful, both of you. What is it now?"

"Santos," said Hortensia, laying her hand upon his shoulder, "I — we want you to release Eduardo Rubio, whom you have as prisoner."

"Release —! Look here, my children, have you been tampering with the *calabosa's* jailor? Beware! Remember, I have had men shot for a less crime than laxness in guarding a prisoner! How did you know he was there? Who told you?"

"Oh, Santos, it was not the jailor. We heard it from some of the men; it is no secret. But they say he may be shot. We don't want him shot, Santos. Let him go; remember, he was our play-fellow for years; that we were children together; and he never went wrong until the Spanish influence drew him over to the wrong side."

"But it is mainly on your account that I have him incarcerated. He is on the side of Spain — but so are thousands of others; we could easily forgive that. But he is also particularly troublesome on account of his insane desire to abduct my pretty sister-in-law. Of course, if she has no objection, — if she really desires to be abducted, and so give handsome, stalwart Americans the chance to rescue her, — why, then, there is no good reason for his detention, eh?"

"Then you will? Oh, Santos, it is good of you. But please do have him taken a long way from here; because you see —"

"No, indeed, I do not see; but never fear. He shall be taken away so far that he sha'n't trouble you again for a while, anyway.

"Thank you, brother-in-law; you have relieved me so much. Do you know, I feared you might be going to have him shot. You will let him go soon — very soon — won't you?"

"Just as soon as the next vessel sails for the United States, your friend shall be put on board, and if he comes back, he takes his life in his hands. But do you really love him so very much, *Hortensia*?"

"No, Santos, I do not love him at all; but you must remember that we were companions before we could talk; we went to school together, and there is a certain feeling for Eduardo that I have for no one else."

"Well, sweet sister mine, I am glad you have no particular affection for him; but I had fancied he had for you something of a different character from a purely Platonic sentiment. However, this shall be the end of it. You will soon have one lover the less; though, as to that, you will have at least two left, and that is quite enough for a young lady of your tender years."

"Now, Santosito, what do you mean? You know

that I have no lover at all ; have I, Lolita ? How could I have, immured here like a little nun ? ”

“ To be sure, how could she ? Poor little prisoner ! As if no gallant Americanos had been here the past week ; and as if one of them did not worship the very ground she walks over, every day of his life ! ”

“ Oh, Santosito ; that is not true, is it ? Is it true ? Which one, tell me, is it — is it — ? ”

Hortensia was blushing rosy red. Child-like, she had forgotten her troubles at this new diversion ; woman-like, she had forgotten her quondam lover at the prospect of another.

“ Well, if you do not know, how can I tell you ? ” rejoined the Colonel. “ Faith, but there’s one of them I would *not* wish it to be ; but I fancy there’s no danger. Here they come now, galloping abreast down the lane. Tell us, now, which one do you prefer ? ”

“ No, Santos, don’t tease the child,” interposed the Colonel’s wife ; but Hortensia assumed a thoughtful air and said, slowly, “ I like — neither ! ” Then she caught up her flowing tresses, which had escaped confinement during the long and exciting discussion, and darting a silver dagger through the massy coil, ran into the house and to her room.

The two horsemen drew rein at the veranda, saluted their friends, and then joined them. They were in good spirits, — such spirits, in fact, as men should be in who had had a dash on horseback

across a plateau two thousand feet in air and amidst entrancingly beautiful scenery. Even the Major was somewhat animated, and there was an expectant look in his eye which betokened an awakened interest in life.

"Thought we saw Miss Hortensia as we came up," said the Doctor. "Is she afraid of another raid from the guerillas? No fear now; the old mountain is safe as a house; got patrols all over it, and — But, pardon, Madame, business before pleasure, you know. Got a message for the Colonel. I'm one of the General's aides, now, you know. Promoted for bravery in the field,—or rather, on the mountain. Here it is, Colonel. Don't mind us; go right ahead and read it. Guess I know what it's about."

The Colonel took the paper from the Doctor's hands, glanced over it, and gave utterance to an exclamation of more force than elegance. Then he turned to his wife: "My dear, can you prepare to depart day after to-morrow? We have orders to leave Yunque within two days' time."

The Major, meanwhile, had said nothing; but he now looked anxiously in the direction of certain approaching footsteps, and a glad look crept into his eyes as a figure in white appeared in the doorway.

CHAPTER XIV.

PLAYING THE ENEMY'S GAME.

“**B**OOTS and saddles” sounded the bugler, at dawn of their last morning on the plateau of Yunque. The great plain was soon astir with the movement of armed men and the assembling of pack-trains, and two hours after the sun had risen above the forest, solitude reigned where but lately busy life had pursued its many activities. Down the declivities, in single file, the motley company pursued its way, silent and sullen. Many a farewell glance was given to the abandoned huts with their smiling gardens of fruits and flowers; many a sigh wafted back to the scene of so much happiness and content as had been theirs, by the departing insurgents and their families. It was a necessity of war, — the abandonment of the Yunque; they recognised this, but there was not one, from the silent General to the humblest private, who did not feel dejected at the thought.

It was the beginning of that great raid, which has since passed into history as one of the unparalleled achievements of this warfare, by which General Maceo traversed the entire island of Cuba, and in-

flicted upon the Spaniards a loss of property and soldiers never to be repaired. Starting from the Yunque, near the extreme eastern end of the island, he swept across the different provinces, a whirlwind of terror and an avenger of destiny. He did not halt until every portion of the island had felt the weight of his arm, until every section had acknowledged the supremacy — at least temporarily — of the patriot movement. It was not his intention to utterly abandon the table-mountain, so he left a small garrison of seasoned soldiers, under Don Carlos, who were ordered to hold it against all odds. If they failed, they were to follow him, but were to maintain the post if possible, as a possible base of operations for the future.

For thus the insurgents battled for the liberties of their beloved island; thus they fought to recover from the usurping Spaniards the beautiful Pearl of the Antilles. They lived in holes and caves, like the wolves and foxes; dwelt in isolated spots among the craggy hills and mountains, like the eagles, and thence descended upon the fertile plains, when opportunity offered, and grasped the destroyer by the throat. The prudent General, then, did not contemplate an advance without leaving open a way of retreat, and a possible return to the desultory methods of warfare, which necessity compelled them to adopt at the outset.

When the forest lowlands were reached, and the

open trails taken which led through the valleys, there was more of system in their advance: the cavalry led the van, followed by a portion of the infantry, then the baggage-train of mules and horses, and the scant equipment of artillery, followed by the families of the officers and soldiers; after them the rear-guard, composed of the best of the fighting men.

Every precaution had been taken to maintain secrecy, lest the ever-vigilant enemy at Baracoa should penetrate the insurgent's designs, and not only fall upon their rear, but alarm the country in advance. Late in the afternoon, beneath the giant trees that filled the forest-covered vales between the mountains, the force was brought to a halt and camp was formed. Here the trails diverged, one keeping westerly along the axial line of the island, another branching off northerly toward the coast, to the little harbour of Nipé, where the Americans had first landed, and where the filibusters came with their vessels.

It had been planned to send a small force to the harbour to meet an incoming filibuster and guard the Professor and the prisoner, Rubio, who were to take passage for Florida. The discovery of the skulls and treasures in the cave had satisfied the Professor's desire for exploration for the time being, and it had been agreed between the four who owned them that he should take them to the States, where

they would be much safer than in Cuba. As the great bales of rawhide — in which the objects of pottery and gold, the skulls and skeletons, had been carefully wrapped — were so bulky as to require the services of two mules to carry them, to take them along with the expedition was out of the question. So a paper was drawn up in which the joint ownership of the treasure was declared, and the Professor given authority to hold it for the mutual benefit of himself and the other three. A rough estimate of the golden objects placed their value at eighty thousand dollars, but it was settled that they should not be disposed of until the Major and Archie should join the Professor; or, in case of their death, until after a certain time should have elapsed.

After a hasty meal at the camp, where the main division was to rest until daylight next morning, the Professor and his escort took the coast trail for the harbour. With him went the prisoner, his legs tied beneath the belly of the mule he rode, and guarded by a trooper on either side. His hands were free, in order to guide his beast, and his eyes were open to everything going on around him; and it little occurred to those three Americans, discussing their affairs within his hearing, that he knew of the contents of those precious bales of rawhide, or had any interest in securing possession of them. But bound and a prisoner as he was, he offered silent thanks to the Virgin for the information then vouchsafed him, and looked

upon the recovery of his lost treasure as already accomplished. It was with a gay air of confidence, then, that he waved an adieu to Hortensia and her sister, while a sardonic smile curled his lips as he turned to follow the treasure-laden mules. The Colonel had noted his assured and buoyant bearing, and it plunged him into thoughtfulness, but he did not dream of the cause.

The Major also noticed it, and bit his moustache with an absorbed air; at one time he made a movement as though he would have detained the Professor by riding after him and communicating some suspicion which had crept into his brain. He afterwards regretted that he had not done so; but the afternoon wore away, the sun fell to its setting behind the trees, and still the unsuspecting old man travelled unwarned to his fate.

Naturally, the Colonel's household and the two Americans formed a group by themselves, both on the march and at the pitching of the camp. One or the other, the Major or the Doctor, was ever at Miss Hortensia's side, or within call, and each exerted himself to the utmost to win a smile or divert her mind from the saddening episodes of the journey. Both she and her sister were attached to their home at the Yunque, and in the seclusion of their chambers had mingled their tears over the cruel necessity that compelled them to dismantle it and break camp with the rest. The choice had been offered them of

accompanying the battalion or seeking refuge in some one of the few cities loyal to the patriot cause. They had unhesitatingly decided to go with the battalion, for, as Lolita reasoned, they no longer had a home of their own, — all they possessed was adventured with the insurgents, and all they loved were fighting in Cuba's behalf. The wife could entertain no other thought than of being with her husband, and Hortensia and her sister were inseparable.

The General had grumbled a little at the prospect of burdening the command with women and non-combatants, but the Colonel had assured him that his wife and her sister should not detain the march for an hour, that they would be active workers rather than hindrances; and later events proved the correctness of his assertions.

So it was that, though their hearts were sore and sad, they had summoned up all their pride and courage, and presented a gay front to their escort and the soldiers. The sight of their beautiful faces, animated and smiling, cheered the soldiers themselves as they marched past them in the forest gloom, and as the Colonel was obliged to be at the head of his command, he was glad to accept the proffered protection of the two Americans, who thus had a good excuse for their devotion to the ladies.

It was now getting to be a debatable question of how long these two dissimilar members of the sex masculine could offer tribute at a common shrine

without open rupture. The Major might have been seen in frequent reverie, gloomily gnawing the ends of his long moustache and glowering from under his lowered brows at his lively rival, while the latter had more than once shaken his clenched fist behind the Major's back and muttered under his breath something that would not look very well in cold type. But as both were honourable men (though perhaps having different conceptions of the term), and as neither had declared himself, neither could see the way clear to rid himself of a dangerous rival.

It was by no means a foregone conclusion that the fair Hortensia would favour either one of the twain, for she had distributed her smiles and favours with apparent impartiality.

But the rivals laboured amicably enough at the construction of a palm-leaf shelter for the housing of their divinity and her friends, after the site of the camp was settled, and together received and appropriated her thanks at the conclusion of their work.

An hour later, when Colonel Gomez came to seek repose in the bosom of his family, he found a happy group awaiting him. But soon after they had gathered around the rude table for their evening meal the harmony of the little circle was disturbed by a chance remark of the fair Hortensia.

"Ah, Señores Americanos," she said, playfully shaking a finger at the rivals, "I have found out

whence came the golden beetle, and no thanks to either of you!"

"You have found out?" demanded both in a breath. "Who told you?"

"No matter, my friends; but I know."

"Indeed," said the Major, "but it does matter."

His earnest manner impressed the girl — frightened her, in truth, and she stammered, "Rubio told me."

"*Demonio!*" ejaculated the Colonel.

The Major said nothing; but he darted a reproachful glance at the maiden, rose hastily, and went out into the darkness.

"Why, what have I done?" pleaded Hortensia, tears gathering in her eyes.

"Oh, nothing much," replied the Colonel; "only, if Rubio knew that, he also knows what the bales contain; and if he knows that, then good-bye, treasure; and the Professor's life isn't worth much, either; that's all. It's nothing to worry about."

But Hortensia and her sister were in consternation, not at all allayed when, a little later, the Major appeared, mounted and armed.

He beckoned to the Colonel. "Can I overtake them, do you think?"

The Colonel shook his head. "I fear not, but try; ride hard, perhaps they may be delayed at the shore. Remember, Rubio is most desperate. If

they once get on board the vessel together, I doubt if your friend will land alive!"

"Yes, I know," rejoined the Major. Then he saluted the ladies gravely, his eyes lingering an instant on the girl's pale face, put spurs to his horse, and at once disappeared in the gloom of the night.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE ENEMY'S HANDS.

THE night was dark, the trail obscure ; but the Major was mounted upon a horse that was foaled in the forest, and could follow the faint trace of a path almost as well as if it were a country lane, open and fenced. With his machete in hand, slashing at impeding bush-ropes which hung across the trail, clearing himself of tangles of sword-grass and spiny palms which bent over and athwart it, the silent horseman pursued his way as rapidly as the circumstances would allow. His mount was by no means fresh, but it was a tough beast he bestrode, and could do its sixty miles a day with no food other than the native fodder or *maleja* and a sip of water at the wayside springs.

The distance was not great, but the advance party with the Professor had several hours the start. Somewhat of a fatalist, the Major believed in doing the best he could and trusting the result to fate, or Providence. So he did not fret or curse at the numerous obstructions in the way, but calmly removed them, talking to his horse the while, and then pressed on at a gallop whenever the path was

practicable. The hours sped by, and finally the horseman felt the salt wind coming from the sea and knew that he was near his journey's end. The silence of the forest was most oppressive, no other sounds greeting him but the hooting of the owl in the trees overhead, and the cry of the night-hawk as it pursued its circling flight after its prey of nocturnal insects. Of the ordinary dangers attendant upon tropical travelling there were none, for the forests of Cuba are remarkably free from them; not even wolves or wildcats, pumas or ocelots, as are found in Mexico and Central America.

Feeling the assuring breath of the sea on his cheek the Major pushed forward rapidly, at last emerging upon the beach of a secluded bay where the trees of the forest came down to the water's edge. From the shimmer of the water, and the snowy clouds banked above the horizon line, sufficient light was reflected to show him that the little bay was vacant of boat or sail. He strained his eyes anxiously in the direction of the coral reefs where the open sea was breaking fretfully, and saw a black speck fast disappearing; a moment later it had vanished. With a groan the Major let his hand fall from his eyes and turned his horse down the beach toward the bank of the river emptying its waters here.

A low murmur of voices reached his ears, and he soon found a small company of soldiers gathered

around a heap of bales and boxes, and engaged in lading a train of mules with their contents. They looked up in surprise as he appeared, and a few of them sprang to their arms stacked a little distance away, thinking he must be an enemy who had found out their retreat. But they quickly saw their mistake, and flocked around him, perhaps expecting further orders from their General, in whose confidence they knew him to be. It was unnecessary to ask if the filibuster vessel had been there, for the freshly landed cargo told the tale; or to ask if she had departed, for he had caught a glimpse of her receding form in the distance.

"How long since she sailed?" he demanded hoarsely of the officer in command.

"Nearly an hour," the man replied, drawing himself up and giving the military salute.

"The American and the Spaniard and their luggage were safely put on board?"

"Yes, sir; the prisoner's manacles were taken off, and he was left at liberty on deck, as the Colonel ordered."

"Did either leave a message?"

"No, señor; ah, yes," replied the captain of the escort. "Rubio, the prisoner, came to the rail as the vessel left us, and said, 'Tell the Colonel I send him thanks for placing them in my hands.'"

"What did he mean by that?"

"*Quien sabe, Señor Capitan*, — who knows?"

"That is all ; thank you. At what time do you expect to leave?"

"At daybreak, God willing. We have orders from the General to take the trail to the eastward of the Sierra de Moa, and meet him at the headwaters of the Mayari, near the base of the Sierra de Cristal."

"How far is that? How long will it take you?"

"God knows how far it is ; there are three rivers to ford ; it will, perhaps, take us two days' time."

"Can you detail a man to care for my horse? He is pretty well blown."

"Assuredly, señor ; we are all your servants ; we cannot forget your assistance here a month ago, when you and the other Americano taught us how to load and fire the new repeaters. Command us."

"Many thanks ; it was nothing. I will sleep a while. Awaken me when you are ready to start."

Unrolling a scrape from his saddle, the Major spread it beneath a sea-grape, gave his horse to the soldier, with injunctions to care for it as if his own, and, with rifle by his side, lay down to sleep. He was too old a campaigner to allow present cares to interfere with nature's restorative, but he could not altogether dismiss the sinister message of the prisoner from his mind. "Our worst fears are realised," he thought. "We have, indeed, delivered them into the enemy's hands : the treasure, and our friend as well. Ah, me ! but it can't be helped. If I could

only have reached here in time and given the Professor warning!"

It seemed to him he had hardly fallen asleep, when a light touch on the shoulder woke him, and he sprang to his feet. The first signs of approaching dawn were in the east; on the beach were the soldiers, mounted, ready for departure; the mule-train was already in motion, the rear end of it just disappearing into the forest.

"Señor Capitan," said the soldier detailed to assist him, touching his hat, "here is your cup of coffee. The horse is picketed down by the river bank. Shall I saddle him for you now?"

"No, do not wait for me. Ask the Captain for a day's rations, which put in my saddle-bags, and tell him I will remain here till nightfall, then push after and overtake him."

The soldier saluted and withdrew, and soon the Major was left alone. Though baffled in his intention to overtake the Professor before his departure, yet the Major could not at once abandon the idea of rescue. Hopeless as was the scheme, he resolved to stay on or near the beach until night: perchance some news might come. The wind was blowing strongly from the opening through the reefs, and some message might drift to him, perhaps, on the incoming tide. It was merely a forlorn hope; but as the abandonment would be forever, once he had set out on the return journey to the insurgent camp,

he clung to the hope, and prepared to pass the day by the shore. The sun came up and turned the coolness of dawn into a furnace heat, so he sought shelter for himself and beast within the cool recesses of the forest on the river bank. While seeking a spot where his horse might graze, he found a little glen where a tributary rivulet flowed to the main river, and which, surrounded by tree-ferns and tangled jungle, was wholly sheltered from the heat of the sun.

Tethering his faithful animal, he collected saddle and accoutrements, and was about casting them at the foot of a mighty mahogany, where he could sleep away a portion of the day, when he thought he heard groans. Following the direction of the sounds, he found a narrow trail beaten through the jungle grass, and not far away a slightly constructed "lean-to" of palm leaves, from which evidently the sounds proceeded. Halting a few paces away, he watched it narrowly, for his recent experiences had emphasised his former practice on the plains, — to keep always on guard when in an enemy's country. But the groans were repeated, and, drawing his revolver, he proceeded cautiously towards the hut. Soon he saw a human form stretched out on a bed of trash.

"Who are you?" he demanded, covering the object with his weapon. There was a slight rustling of the leaves, a shining pistol-muzzle protruded, and a bullet whizzed past his head. He had seen the

motion, stealthy as it was, and had leaped aside just in time to avoid the messenger of death. Then, seeing that the gleaming barrel lay inert, the smoke still curling from its muzzle, he dashed in and secured it. There was no opposition, the nerveless hand that still grasped it having apparently no strength to raise it again. As he raised his eyes to the face of the emaciated form stretched so quietly upon the ground, he involuntarily uttered a cry of pity, for it appeared the visage of one dead. The eyes were sunken, the hair and beard matted and unkempt, the lips parted and livid. The man had evidently swooned, his last remaining effort having been expended upon that deed with murderous intent. Removing the weapon, the Major ran out for a hatful of water, some of which he dashed into the death-like face. With a hollow moan, the being returned to consciousness, opening his eyes and staring wildly into his rescuer's face. Then he closed them again, and it was a full hour before the Major had the satisfaction of seeing him awake. Meanwhile, having observed that he was in the last stages of starvation, the American had prepared some broth, which he now tenderly pressed upon him. This refreshed him so much that he soon sat up and looked about him ; and before noon was in condition to talk. Into his lustreless eyes there had crept a look of recognition ; but, though the Major's eyes were bent upon him with kindly

glances, he could not manifest that the recognition was mutual.

At last : "I know you. Do — you — not — know — me?"

"No."

"So? I am he whom — they — shot."

"What! God in heaven! The Spaniard — our companion on the voyage from Florida? We thought they had left you for dead!"

"Yes. So — they — thought. They shot, but did — not — kill — me." He spoke with effort; but after a while gained sufficiently to sit up and relate to his sympathetic listener the terrible story.

"The Colonel, you remember, was in desperate hurry to leave. He had but a few minutes in which to commit — to murder me. The men, too, were in haste. They stood me against a tree and fired, then departed, without even remaining to see if I was dead; or, what is still more strange, to search me for money and valuables. As they fired, I had the presence of mind to fall as one dead; in fact, three bullets struck me, and my wounds bled as though they had been twenty.

"I fainted where I fell, and when I recovered consciousness all was dark and still. I dragged myself to the river and bathed my wounds, then tried to sleep, but the pain was terrible; in the morning I could not even move. Around me gathered the vultures; one even perched upon my body

and began to rend my clothing as if impatient for me to die. With my revolver I shot this evil bird, and the rest flew away. Then hunger impelled me to search for food ; I found little, and as the days passed I grew fainter and weaker, strength and courage going, until — you came, and with my last effort I tried to shoot you. My will alone kept me alive, and I took you for a Cuban ; but I will yet have my revenge.” The Spaniard hissed out the word like a serpent, and his eyes gleamed, serpent-like, with baleful fires.

Then the Major said, “Listen ; we are here alone on the shore of this desolate bay. If I leave you will you not surely perish ?”

The Spaniard bowed his head, covering his eyes with shrunken fingers.

“Then by your own admission your life lies in my hands. God knows I would not willingly abandon you ; I will promise not to on one condition only : that you will not lift your hand in revenge upon those who committed this terrible crime.”

The man glared at him, at first speechless ; then he said, “I do not understand you, perhaps. Gomez is my enemy ; I must kill him !”

“And circumstances have made him my friend. To save you, I must take you to his camp. Heaven forbid that I should take him an enemy ; I must have a pledge from you.”

“But he will surely take my life.”

"No! I will answer for it with my own."

"Well," said the man, with a deep sigh, "I give my word. But beware that friend; you do not know the depths of his base heart."

"I think I can trust him," rejoined the Major, with a smile; but before another sun had set he knew that the man had spoken truly!

CHAPTER XVI.

UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH.

THE main body of the command had kept on its course westerly, and the second afternoon after the Major's departure, halted at the foot-hills of the Sierra de Cristal. Here, in a grove of wild bread-fruits, and around a clear spring, — the source of the river Mayari, — the camp was pitched for the night. It was yet early in the day, but the General had decided to await here the arrival of the detachment which had been sent to the bay for the filibuster's cargo. For his troops were as yet poorly armed, notwithstanding the supplies that had come by the previous shipments; and, besides, he wished to gain a surplus of arms and ammunition, with which to equip the forces he expected to augment his command as they progressed through the enemies' country beyond. His objective point was the extreme western province of Pinar del Rio, which it was hoped to gain in two months' time, and to which the Cuban agents in the United States had been directed to send the next expedition. In fact, it was in one of Pinar del Rio's capacious harbours, not long after, that the famous *Bermuda* expedition was

so successfully landed, and the insurgents supplied with much-needed supplies and munitions.

Late in the afternoon, while Colonel Gomez was superintending the erection of a palm leaf shelter for his family, a native of the region, evidently a young half-breed about eighteen years old, approached and handed him a letter. It was addressed to "Major Carrolton, in care of Colonel Santos Gomez."

"Well, my man," he said to the messenger, "Major Carrolton is not here at present, but when he comes I will give it to him. Meanwhile, go get some food, and take a rest."

"*Sí, Señor Coronel*, but I think you had better read the letter first."

"Read the letter? It is not for me. What do you mean? Where did you get it?"

"*No, Señor Coronel*, it is not addressed to you, that is certain; but I think it is intended for you to read. So the man hinted to me who gave it me to bring to you. I met him in the forest yesterday, and he gave me a dollar to deliver it."

The sinister meaning of his words aroused the Colonel's suspicions; but still he was unwilling to violate the confidence reposed in him by one who had been his guest. He had a gentleman's instinctive repugnance to perusing a missive not intended for his own eyes. "There can be but one excuse," he muttered; "this may be very urgent, — may have a bearing upon the mystery which the Major is

trying to unravel, and if so I can despatch a swift messenger back on the trail to meet him." Thus reasoning, he broke the seal, and read, —

"Major Carrolton will confer an inestimable favour upon those of the Spanish cause whom he has already assisted so ably, if he can and will manage to detain Maceo's command two days longer at the base of the Cristales. If also he can find some means of 'removing' the heads of commands, such as Maceo and Gomez, he will win the gratitude of, and be suitably rewarded by —

"His comrade,

"HISPANERO."

While the reader stood astounded, dazed, at the contents of the letter, his wife approached.

"What is it, dear?" she asked, seeing the note in his hands, and the puzzled look on his face.

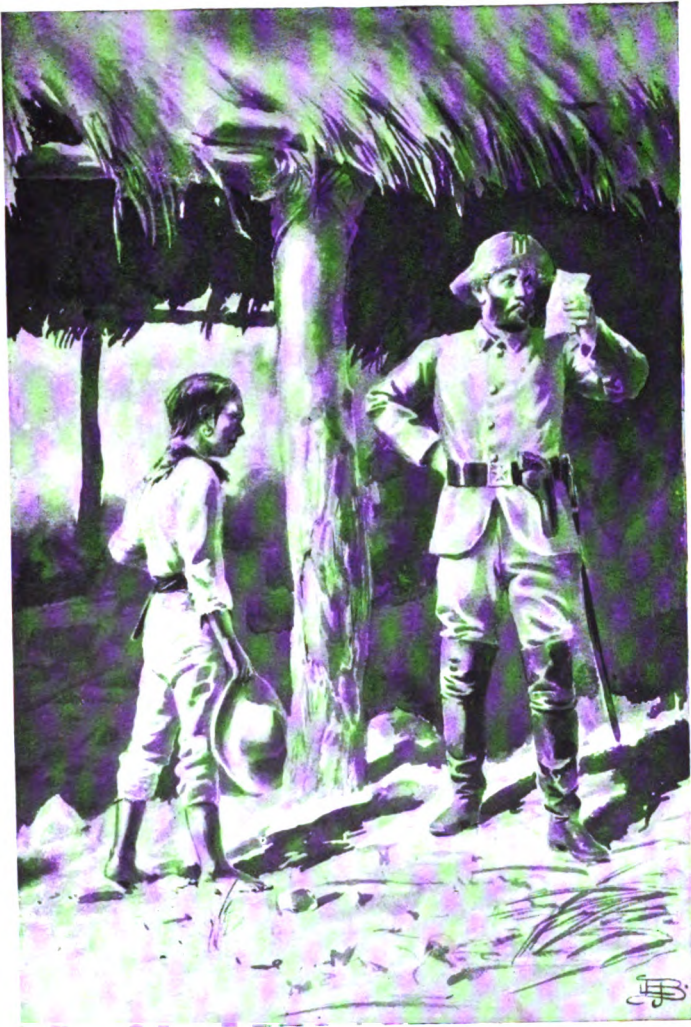
He answered by placing in her hands the letter, which she read, with a constantly deepening frown on her lovely countenance.

"Treachery!" she said, as she gave him back the missive, her eyes flashing.

"So it seems," repeated her husband; "but I did not suspect him of this. I knew he had a secret mission, but supposed it was in our favour."

"Oh, pah! It is not the Major I mean who is treacherous. Some one is seeking his destruction. That is clear enough to me."

"I'm not so sure," rejoined the Colonel. "In these times we cannot put confidence in any one. I



THE COLONEL READS THE LETTER.

might suspect my own brother if he were to be the recipient of a letter so compromising as that one."

"No, no, Santos. Do not think that. It is impossible that Major Carrolton should betray us. He may have his own secrets, which he has a right to have; but so far as being open to an accusation of treachery, why, it is absolutely impossible, — incredible. His nature is too frank and honest for that; he would die, I am sure, before he would do anything to cause harm to our household. Besides, even if this were not so, you forget —"

"No, my dear, I forget nothing. But it is not for me to declare whether he may be guilty or not. This is a matter that affects the whole command; one, in fact, for my superior officer to decide."

"Oh, Santos, Santos! Do you mean that you will present that letter before the General and a court-martial? If you do that, then there is no doubt as to his fate. Do not do that, Santos, I implore you. I know what the verdict will be, for they are too prone to declare a death decree, knowing that a dead man more or less matters not much."

"Lolita, darling, I must. More lives than ours are at stake in this affair. Personally, I am disposed in favour of the American; but I cannot withhold this letter from the General, and he must pass upon the accused man's guilt or innocence."

Saying this, Colonel Gomez strode off to consult

with General Maceo, whom he found at the entrance to his tent, fuming at an ignorant countryman, who had just come in with tidings not altogether agreeable.

"See here, Gomez, what do you think this son of a sheep is telling me? Why, that there are two battalions of the enemy within twenty hours' march of us, that they are bent upon attacking us, and that they outnumber our force two to one. They seem to be confident, too, of overtaking us, having had some assurance from some traitor within the lines that we shall be detained in a position favourable for attack. Now, did you ever hear such nonsense in your life? You know our scouts have been all over the province, and have reported that there isn't a Spaniard within sixty miles. Now, what do you think?"

Without answering verbally, the Colonel handed his superior officer the letter he had opened and brought, and stood calmly by while it was perused by the excited General.

"Ten thousand devils!" he ejaculated. "If this is genuine, the case seems clear enough, for the two stories agree well, we must admit. But pshaw, I cannot believe such charges of that American soldier. Still, we can't go by appearances these times. Evidence is lacking as to his real object in coming to the island. Here is an explanation that seems plausible, at all events. Well, Colonel, there is but

one thing to do. I will send around my aide with a summons for the court to meet, and will lay the case before them. We have no time to spare, as you know."

The court assembled at dusk, the letter and evidence were laid before the officers, the witnesses questioned. Within an hour the members of the court had come to an unanimous decision, which was, "That the accused, Major Carrolton, was unquestionably guilty, and was condemned as a spy, to be shot at sunrise the following morning!"

As the Colonel was hastening to his quarters for the night, he met the advance horsemen of the escort just coming in from their journey to the coast. They separated as he passed, and from their midst rode two, one of whom saluted and called him by name.

It was the Major, accompanied by the man he had rescued. "Colonel," he said, "before I make my formal report, I have a favour to ask of you."

"It is granted, if not too great a favour," replied the officer, with a twinge of pity for the man now before him, whom he had assisted to condemn.

"A man's life is in peril, Colonel Gomez, and you can save it."

The Cuban looked up sharply, — suspiciously. "How did he get the news?" he muttered. "Who has told him of his sentence?" Then, aloud, — "Is it your own life, Major Carrolton? How did you know it was imperilled?"

"Oh, no, not mine, Colonel; but another's."

"Then I grant it. Who is the man, — where is he?"

"Andres Machado, whom you left for dead at the bay of Nipe. I found him alive there, and have brought him with me here."

"Machado? Is it possible for the dead to live? And did that fiend escape his just deserts? He has been officially reported as dead, — he no longer lives, neither in the eyes of the law, nor in the eyes of his fellow-countrymen. No, a thousand times, no! He shall be shot!"

"But, Colonel, I have pledged my word; you have given me your own. It will be an outrage to shoot this man after he has already suffered the torments of death, after we have pledged him our protection."

"Settle that between yourselves. To-morrow, at sunrise, we will see that he gets his deserts. At least, you are absolved. Is that all?"

He turned to leave, when the Spaniard, hitherto silent, passive, urged his horse between the two men, and with a quick motion of his right hand, drew his revolver and fired.

For a second of time the Colonel stood motionless, staring at his enemy, a gleam of impotent hate in his eyes; then, without a word, reeled and fell heavily to the ground.

The deed had been done so quickly that the Major had no time to interpose to avert the fatal

shot. He sat like one in a daze, gazing first at the Spaniard, then at the prostrate body of his former friend. The darkness of night had long since settled over the forest, so that objects were indistinctly visible; but of one thing the outlaw and the man who had brought him here became aware: that a guard of soldiers was advancing, visible by the light of flaring torches, which some of them held aloft.

"I cannot protect you longer," said the Major, at last. "I would have defended you with my life before, but for this you must answer!"

"I am ready," rejoined the Spaniard, scornfully and triumphantly. "I shall die happy now, having removed that tyrant Gomez from the earth. No, my friend, you cannot defend me. For what you have already done I owe you more than I can repay. You gave me the opportunity for revenge. You are absolved,—he said it. And I? Was I to stand tamely by and have my death sentence passed without protest? No less than you was I absolved from my oath; for he respected neither yours nor mine. But see, they come to arrest me. They will not suspect you of this deed; then I will escape into the darkness."

As the guard reached the scene of the crime, the Spaniard slunk off beyond the circle of light; and still the Major sat immovable, as if bewildered by the sudden and terrible succession of events.

"Halt!" commanded the officer of the guard. The soldiers stood still, with guns in grasp.

"Major Carrolton," then said the officer, turning to the silent horseman, "my orders are to arrest you, to confine you till daylight to-morrow morning, then to see that you are shot; by sentence of court-martial. Men, surround the prisoner!" A soldier grasped the bridle of his horse; but still the rider moved not.

At that moment, the torch-light flashed upon the body of Colonel Gomez lying on the ground. "Ha!" he shouted, "and a murderer too. This is proof positive that he is a traitor. My God! It is our Colonel."

The men had hitherto performed their duty in a perfunctory way, as if disinclined to arrest one who had been convicted on circumstantial evidence only. But the discovery of the Colonel's body worked them to a fury. Some more of his command coming up at that moment, there was an instant cry for the murderer's blood. A score of hands were raised, knives and machetes gleamed in the torch-light, — a rush was made for the silent figure on horseback.

Just then from the outer wall of darkness burst in the apparition of a man, urging his horse into the midst of the throng. "He is innocent," he cried; "the American is innocent. I killed that man. I, Andres Machado!"

For a second the uplifted weapons paused in air ; then the infuriated soldiers fell upon the Spaniard and cut him to pieces. The Major might have escaped in the *melée*, but he sat still in his saddle, awaiting his fate.

CHAPTER XVII.

FOR LOVE, FOR LIBERTY.

THE fury of the soldiers was spent, satisfied with the death of their victim. They parted sullenly and dispersed to their tents. Like a burst of tropical tornado, — like the hurricane that yearly swept their island, changing the face of nature in an instant, — their own destructive impulses were soon exhausted.

Around the prisoner the guard still kept watch, awaiting the command of their Lieutenant. With a glance at the prostrate form of his superior officer, the Lieutenant ordered his men to take their man to the guard-house, — to the tent erected for that purpose.

It was but a short distance away, and as soon as the Major had been left there, with three men to watch him, the remainder of the guard was led back to the scene of the murder. The officer was non-plussed for a while, not knowing what to do with the Colonel's corpse. He shrank from appearing with it before the dead man's wife, — from communicating to her the terrible tidings, and so took the easiest way out of the difficulty by ordering his

soldiers to take the murdered man to the General's quarters.

Thus it happened that Señora Gomez was not informed of the tragedy until the next morning; for the General also delayed the message till the last moment possible. So all night she awaited the coming of one who would never greet her again.

The summary proceedings of the court-martial did not surprise the victim of its harsh decision. In justice, he should have had a personal hearing before the military judges; but in thus dispensing with the presence of the accused the Cubans had only taken a leaf out of the Spaniards' own book of military law.

Dismounting, the Major strode inside and seated himself. His calm and unruffled demeanour so impressed the officer in charge, who had known him at the Yunque, that he humbly craved his pardon.

An amused smile played around the prisoner's lips as he drew off his gauntlets and cast them on the ground. "*Caramba!* It would be absurd if it were not so serious a consequence to me. But let it go. One has to die some time. Having lived a soldier's life, it is good that I die a soldier's death. My innocence will be shown, perhaps too late, but that does not much matter."

"If you have friends, sir, to whom you would wish to send a message, you may charge me with its delivery. I will be faithful to the trust."

"No, — no ; except there is one, only one ; but she may not so much care. Thank you, Lieutenant. If you will provide me with a little food, and then let me sleep ; I am tired with the long ride of to-day. Call me when you are ready. *Adios*, friend ; good-night."

The officer withdrew, leaving in his stead a sentry with loaded musket, while outside the tent two other watchful sentinels stood guard. The prisoner was not manacled ; this indignity was spared him, for the chances were against any attempt at escape or rescue.

It was about midnight. Not only was the prisoner sleeping soundly, but also the sentry within the tent. Had one been watching, he might have seen a small, gloved hand slip stealthily beneath the tent-flap and touch the Major on the shoulder. Light as was the touch, it awoke him, and he sat up and looked about. He quickly saw the hand, — the sleeping sentinel ; and in an instant had reasoned from cause to effect. Booted and spurred as he was, having cast himself on the ground as he had come in from the field, he was ready for action at once. Seizing his sombrero, and snatching at the blanket upon which he had been reclining, he followed the retreating hand into outer air. He had faith enough in the owner of it to believe that he would find the outside sentries sleeping, or inattentive, like the one inside. And so it was : each

leaned against a tree, with rifle clasped in his arms, but deep in slumber.

Rising to his feet, the Major then for the first time saw who had guided him to freedom. He gasped, and whispered huskily, "Hortensia, — Señorita Delgado!"

It was she, standing proudly erect, clad in close-fitting costume, her wealth of tresses tucked away beneath a jaunty hat; in one hand a riding-whip, the other clutching her skirts. She held up the whip-hand warningly. "Hush; there is danger yet. Come with me."

Silent, but wondering, the Major followed her to a clump of palms about a hundred yards away. Arrived there, he found three horses saddled, pistols in holsters, rifles slung from saddle-bows, and the bridles gathered in the hands of a slightly built youth, swarthy and smooth-faced. Going to the side of one of the horses, Hortensia signed the Major to assist her to the saddle, then motioned him to mount the largest of the three, a magnificent roan.

As he swung himself to its back, the boy in waiting vaulted to the saddle of the remaining horse, and, as if at a prearranged signal, the three moved silently away. The youngster took the lead, the others falling behind, close following.

The woods were open, the night was clear, and their horses' footsteps made no sound on the moss-covered

earth. Half an hour's rapid walking brought them to the banks of a stream, rippling and brawling on its course seaward from the mountains. "Up!" said the guide, suiting the action to the word, and directing his horse against the current.

"To throw them off the scent," said Hortensia, leaning towards the man she had rescued. The Major nodded. It was just what he would have done had he been fleeing alone. The scene brought back to him some episodes of his campaigning days in the Apache country. He had had many adventures then, but never one like this. Never one in which his guardian angel was a woman; one who had voluntarily risked her own life to save his. His heart was beating tumultuously, filled with longing to express to the woman at his side his gratitude, his deep sense of thankfulness. But warring with this was his disinclination to accept from her the sacrifice she was making; for he knew its full import: knew that henceforth she would be regarded askance by every one in the command should she live to return. She must have known this; she was not one to act merely upon impulse. Why then had she done it? Why had she not allowed the sentence to be carried into effect? The result would have been merely one American the less; one who a month ago was unknown to her. Why, indeed? Why? — a little word, but, dropped into the Major's consciousness, like a pebble into a placid pool, it

worked a wonderful change in his hitherto serene, self-centered nature. Evolved from the ferment of emotions this question had evoked, one answer only appeared: she had been moved by some soul-stirring emotion, some impulse from the well-springs of her very being! Could it be —? Yes, modest as this man was, it seemed to be forced upon him that the controlling impulse might have been — Love!

Reasoning upon this assumption, he tried to recall every act and look of hers since their first meeting: he remembered her lovely face at their introduction; he thrilled again with that vague warmth as when he held her in his arms, and which at first she had resented; he lingered over her sweet confusion as she came to thank him for her rescue, and saw once more those liquid eyes gleam up to his like stars reflected in a heavenly pool. And all this retrospective musing had the effect of showing clearly to the sorely-puzzled searcher after truth one thing only: his pondering upon the question of her love had acted as a reagent upon his own feelings, and had held the mirror up to his own soul in which he now saw that, beyond all shadow of doubt, *he loved her!*

All this reasoning took far less time than it does to write it down, and the convincing conclusion came over the Major like a flash of light. He was stunned at first, then pervaded by a sensation of joyful exultation, unmarred by circumstance or place. For,

there by his side, riding quietly in his company, was *the* woman of all the great world of women who possessed his heart! It seemed to him, as they rode along in the warm, heavy atmosphere, — their horses stumbling over pebbles, the curling waters foaming about and beneath them, — that he could ride on thus forever. Beyond, somewhere in the dark recesses of the forest, were the gates of Heaven, which would open as they approached, and — they might close upon her and leave him without! The thought was maddening: that he might lose her, even as he had just found her, whom he had been unconsciously seeking all these years.

The deep dusk that precedes the dawn was upon them, when, turning suddenly, their guide whispered them to follow him out of the stream upon the left-hand bank, for the shallows and pools, with interspaces of sand and pebbles, had ceased, and directly in front of them was a series of cascades altogether insurmountable.

They waited nearly an hour beneath the great giants of the forest, which towered above them into space; then the darkness began to be penetrated with shafts of dusky light. All this time the new-born love within was crying out for recognition. The Major dismounted and stood by her side, erect, and apparently calm, yet striving against himself, wrestling with the strong desire to clasp her to his heart and declare the passion that had him in its

thrall. She, — not an object there, animate or inanimate, could have been more calm or cold.

“Why had she risked her life to save his?”

“Oh, merely for a whim.” She did not like bloodshed, much as she had been brought in contact with scenes of warfare. Besides, neither she nor her sister believed him guilty; and again, — were not they indebted to him for their own lives and untarnished honour?”

She sat erect, self-poised and self-possessed, gazing into his face with an abstracted air that well became her. His eager eyes devoured her every feature, watched her every movement, as precious tokens to be treasured.

“But did your sister know?” This he forced himself to ask; yet what cared he whether or no her sister shared her plans?

“Yes, she knew that I was bent on saving you; but not, — not to the extent of guiding you myself; and she helped to make it quite easy for me to drug the sentries and have access to you. But it was the scheme of our guide, Juanito, to bring you to the heights of the mountain. He knows of a secret valley far up the heights, hemmed in between the peaks of the Sierra, where you can stay until the command has passed on and the excitement died away.”

“But you, you —.” It was on his tongue to say, “What will become of you?” Then he reflected:

she would either stay in the mountains, or go back. The one plan seemed to him impracticable, the other impossible. At all events, he had her by him now ; let him not alarm her by undue curiosity or impotunity.

"Now tell me," she said, "about your journey to the coast. It was fruitless, of course. And where did you leave the Doctor, your friend?"

"The Doctor? I have not seen him since I left him with you at the table that night."

"What? Why he followed after you within the hour. Then he must have lost his way, and perhaps is starving in the forest."

"I hope not. Ah, this is terrible: to know that danger impends over my friends, and yet be unable to go to their assistance! But hark! What was that sound? It is like the baying of hounds!"

Hortensia and her companion started, and their cheeks paled.

"Oh, Mother of Mercy, save us! They have taken our trail. There is nothing we can do. We cannot escape! They are the hounds of Berzelius, the most ferocious in the island,—devils in the guise of dogs!"

The Major mounted and faced in the direction of the sounds, between the oncoming fiends and his beloved. A fierce pang tore at his heart-strings; he was paying the penalties of having some one to love!

CHAPTER XVIII.

BESET BY BLOODHOUNDS.

IT is easy to die when one is alone in the world. It was but yesterday that Charles Carrolton looked upon his impending execution as something not altogether dreadful — it would merely be the severance of a tie which bound him to a world he had not asked to enter, and which he did not love over-much. But to-day, how different! To-day the world held something beyond price, to part from which would be torture to his soul; to think that harm might befall, filled his heart with rage. Well has the ancient philosopher said that the married man “hath given hostages to Fortune.” The man who falls in love has given his enemies power over him, — has placed his soul in their hands!

The deep baying of the hounds came nearer. Whatever was to be done must be done at once. But what could they do? They were caught like sheep in a fold, unless — the Major glanced around them, taking in the most minute features of their surroundings. He noted that all the trees in that glen were not giants, — that some of them, while of great girth in the bole, had limbs comparatively near

the ground which could be reached by one standing on a horse's back. He turned to Hortensia, — "Could you, do you think, stand erect on your saddle and grasp that great limb; then, while I support you, pull yourself up to the next above?"

"Yes, yes," she answered eagerly. "But be quick; do not lose an instant. Here, now I am ready." She had ridden beneath the limb at once, — in a moment was standing erect; another, and she was safe, having grasped a bending branch and pulled herself to a seat at least fifteen feet above the ground. "But you and Juanito," she gasped. "Oh, do not delay; they are almost here; I can hear them breaking through the bush. For God's sake, Carlos, Juanito, come up here with me!"

There was almost an altercation between the guide and the Major as to which should be last to seek the place of safety, till the latter seized the boy around the waist and thrust him up to the friendly limb. Then he bade him climb to a seat beside his mistress, while he gathered their rifles and revolvers and passed them after him. With a soldier's forethought he then detached their saddle-bags, which were stored with provisions, and threw them over the limb. Then, just as the leader of the hounds was bursting through the fringe of trees around the glen, he brought the roan to position, and leaped to his feet upon the slippery saddle. But the roan was nervous, starting in terror at the

terrible noises that now pervaded the spot. His companions were feeding at a little distance, and they too manifested signs of terror, snorting and prancing, and at the most critical moment darted into the forest, with bridles dragging and stirrups wildly banging against their sides. This was too much for the roan, who, just as the Major poised himself for a leap at the limb, threw his nose into the air with a snort like a trumpet-blast, and darted in the direction taken by his comrades.

It was fortunate that the Major was a most consummate horseman ; fortunate too, that he still retained his grip on the bridle, and that he had kept his own revolver in hand when he had passed the weapons up to Juanito. For, as he recovered himself after the first plunge of the excited horse, he was attacked by the foremost of the bloodhounds, which sprang at his right foot as it sought the stirrup. But the rider kept his seat, with one hand guiding the horse through the maze of palms and ferns, with the other clutching the revolver. If he but had a straight course, he felt certain he could distance the hounds, or, at the worst, pick them off one by one as they came up with him. But in the intricate and devious windings of his mad race through the trees he more than once doubled on his tracks, and thus allowed the whole pack to gain the glen before he could return to the tree. The hound that had snapped at his foot had kept even

pace with him, but the close tangle of ferns and bush-ropes had prevented a steady aim, though the revolver was raised many times for a shot. But as the glen was again entered, the brute forged ahead and sprang at the good roan's throat. His jaws never closed upon it, for that second a bullet sped into his brain, and the beast fell like a log to the ground.

Freed from one enemy, the Major now slowed his horse a bit, and made for the tree in which were Hortensia and her servant. As if divining his intentions, the whole pack of raging fiends, eight in number, with blood-shot eyes and foaming jaws, sprang for the spot with hideous yelps and cries. Suddenly checking his horse and swerving him to one side, the Major escaped them for the time being, and soon sped out of their immediate reach; but only for a single minute,—they were at his heels again with redoubled fury. Like wolves balked of their prey, they snarled and snapped at each other, yet never for a moment lost sight of their prospective victim.

It was at this moment that Hortensia, who had watched in silence the desperate race for life, covered her eyes with her hands and breathed a prayer for rescue. Juanito, however, while he might have believed in the efficacy of prayer, yet had also faith in works; for he shouted to the horseman in a shrill treble to look out for a lariat which he was letting

down to him. The Major heard, and at once turned his course, speeding right for the spot where he had made his first futile attempt to clutch the limb. The lariat hung there, doubled and looped, the farther end made fast around the limb above the lowermost one, and upon which the two were seated. Putting spurs to the roan, his rider held to the saddle and guided the horse with his knees, and just as the lariat was reached rose with a mighty leap and grasped it well above the loop.

Tearing out from under him, the roan dashed into the forest and was lost to view ; but his rider hung suspended, swinging like a pendulum above that raging mob of baffled brutes. Their instinct seemed to tell them that the man's grasp could not hold for long, and they formed a ring around and beneath him, lying prone, with protruding tongues, and yet with watchful eyes fixed upon him which did not lose a single movement. One or two tried to leap up to him ; but though coming perilously near, missed him by a narrow margin, and fell back with spiteful yelps. But they were destined to disappointment, for slowly, hand over hand, the Major made his way toward the limb, reached it, tried to grasp it, and failed, almost falling back into the throng of demons waiting for him down below. Then Hortensia ceased praying and followed Juanito's example of active work. She bent down and seized her lover by the collar, and with Juanito's assistance, drew him up to safety.

There he lay panting, prone upon the great limb, for the space of full five minutes, not daring to move from fear that his strength might fail and he should fall. Then, with his friends' assistance, he gathered himself up and finally reached the refuge above, where the lateral branches formed a protection against mishap. His first glance, after having reached his goal, was at Hortensia, whose eyes filled with tears as she saw the gratitude that was striving for expression in his. She put out her hands and grasped both his, saying, in a whisper hardly audible, "Oh, I am so thankful! How near you have been to death; twice, now, since my countrymen were so cruel to you!"

"Yes, but for you — you and Juanito — I might be quite unpresentable by this time," rejoined the Major, striving to treat the matter lightly, but making a ghastly failure of the attempt. "It was a close call, no doubt. I think I should have gone under if it hadn't been for — for you. I could not tolerate the thought of leaving you in this terrible predicament, you know," he went on, lamely.

"Oh," she cried, "this is no time for a jest. I acknowledge that when I saw you in such peril I covered my eyes and prayed — prayed from my very heart."

She looked at him frankly, and for one brief moment their gaze was mutual, — heart to heart and soul to soul. For the time they forgot the presence of other company, of the danger that men-

anced them, — everything but themselves and their recent peril.

At last, each with a sigh that was half a gasp, they became conscious of their environment. "And but for Juanito," said the Major, turning to the silent boy, "it might have gone hard with me. He took his hand and pressed it heartily, and made as though to fold him in his arms; but the boy drew away quickly and shudderingly. The Major wondered; but there was a ghost of a smile about Hortensia's lips as she said, "Juanito is shy; he is but a child in reality; sometime I may tell you what the mystery is. No, not now, as her lover looked puzzled; all in good time, — if the good time ever comes."

"Which may God grant," added the Major fervently. "But look, below are our jailors; they seem determined to stay all day, or at least until their owners arrive. I fear there is no alternative; either I must kill them, or they will be the death of us."

"I fear it must be done," said Hortensia, shuddering at the thought. "See, they are leaping at the bole of the tree; something has excited them; perhaps their masters are not so far away after all. I know the owner of this pack; he will mourn their loss if we kill them; yes, mourn them much more than he would the death of his wife. But, as you say, it must be done, and quickly, for we are in danger from two sources: from them, and from those who sent them after us."

"Hortensia," said the Major, taking her hand, which she allowed to remain in his, while their eyes met, "can you not close your eyes and ears for a few minutes? I do not wish to do this deed; those are noble animals of their kind, and it grieves me to destroy them; but —"

"You must; it is either their lives or ours! See, I will wrap my mantilla around me. Come here, Juanito; lean your head against my knee; cling to the branch at your side. Now, Carlos, we will hide our heads beneath the mantilla while you do the duty that is clear."

Juanito crouched at his mistresses side, his head on one knee, while she drew the ample folds of the mantilla around them.

Their arms — three rifles and two revolvers (for the Major had dropped his revolver in that leap for life) — were suspended from the branches ready at hand, and loaded. He knew that to secure all the pack he must shoot accurately and quickly, and almost before Hortensia had shut out the dreadful sight by the mantilla, he had stretched three of the brutes in their death agonies. The remaining five, roused to fury inexpressible, at first tried to leap up the trunk of the tree, during which futile effort two more of them were shot. That left three, who, loth to leave what they had regarded as their prey, darted in a circle around the tree; but one after another they fell before the unerring aim of the marksman,

until the last one lay on his back, his paws curled up toward the sky.

"It was awful," muttered the Major to himself, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow, "a massacre, nothing less, but there was nothing else to do. Now, children, we must make preparations to descend."

Hortensia drew back the mantilla, disclosing a face white and drawn, while in Juanito's dark eyes there was pathetic yearning, as though dumbly asking how long these trials were to endure. The Major was touched to the heart. "Do not worry, little ones," he said, reassuringly; "surely the worst is past. Rise, now, and stretch your limbs a bit, while I slip down and look for the horses."

But Juanito clutched his mistress's knees. "Look," he whispered, huskily, "there, across the stream: a man's face! Oh, he is aiming a rifle! Down, Don Carlos, he might shoot you!"

As the Major caught a glimpse of the strange face, there was a sharp report, and Juanito's head fell like lead into Hortensia's lap. His close-fitting cap came off, and a wealth of black and glossy tresses rippled about the pallid face. With an agonising cry, Hortensia tore apart Juanito's jacket and revealed a round and dimpled shoulder, — a gaping wound from which the red blood flowed.

CHAPTER XIX.

AMBUSCADED BY THE INDIANS.

THE Major saw all this with a half glance backward ; but he could not withhold his gaze from the point where he had glimpsed the face across the stream. It had withdrawn behind a tree, and, gulping down a sob, the American sternly watched for its reappearance, with rifle at hip and finger on the trigger. His quick eye saw a slight motion amongst some twigs, — noted a protruding hand stealthily raising a rifle ; then, as it came to a level, he caught a snap-shot at the enemy, and a man fell forward with a bullet through his brain !

Full ten minutes longer he searched the ambush for sign of life ; but there was none, and so he concluded that the man who shot Juanito had been alone. Then he turned to Hortensia, and, with soothing words meanwhile, helped to stanch the flow of blood, and to place the wounded one in an easy position. There was no time for explanation, — for superfluous words ; but action must be rapid, help soon available, if they would save the life of their guide.

She still lay across Hortensia's knees, unconscious,

breathing heavily, the wound yet weeping blood. It was a trying situation for the trio, twenty feet and more above the ground; for, although the limbs were two feet thick, offering ample accommodations for sitting and moving about, yet there could not be much freedom of movement.

"We must get down at once," said the Major. "Can you support her while I descend and cut some saplings for a ladder and litter? It will seem an eternity of waiting, but I see no other way."

"Yes," murmured Hortensia, looking up, with a pitiful smile hovering around her quivering lips; "anything to save her. We must reach water at the stream; she cannot lie thus much longer."

Almost before the words were said, her lover had slung a rifle over his shoulder, thrust a revolver into his belt, and swung himself down to the ground by a lariat. With his machete he quickly cut down two straight saplings long enough to reach above the lower limb, placed them parallel, a foot apart, and across them at intervals lashed short strips with the supple lianas, hanging from every tree. Then he affixed this improvised ladder against the tree, climbed it carefully, and taking Juanito in his arms, insisted that Hortensia should first descend. After she had gained the ground, he ventured to follow, with the unconscious burden in his arms, one end of the lariat around his waist, the other passed over a limb, and a loop held in one hand, through which

it slipped as he slowly descended. Having taken this precaution against the double burden breaking the slight support, he reached the earth safely, and quickly bore the girl to the bank of the stream.

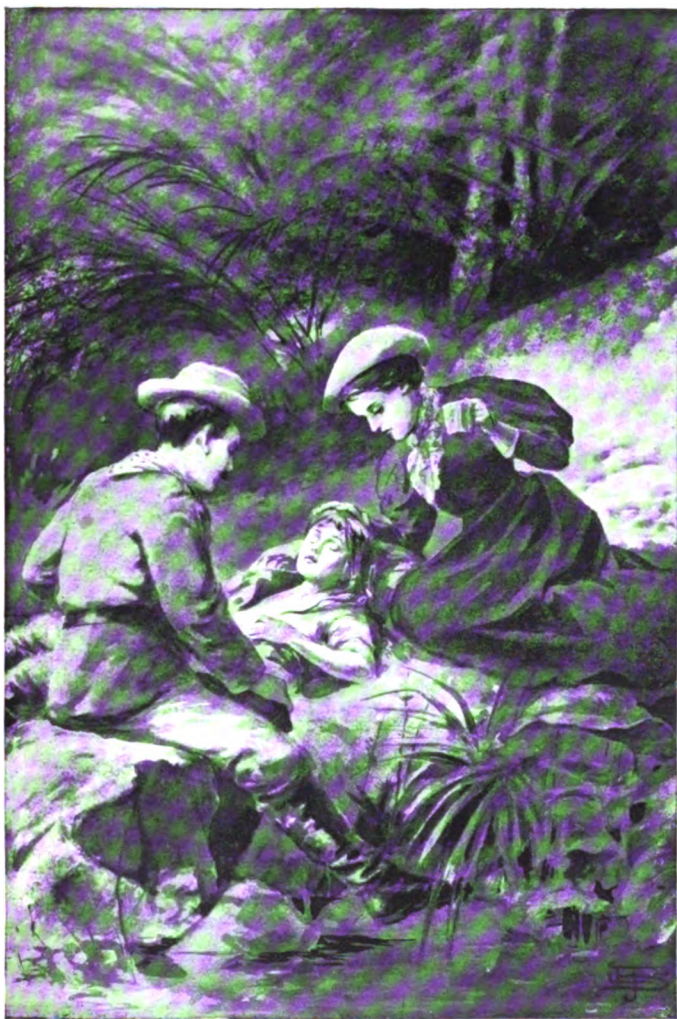
Tremblingly, and with averted eyes, Hortensia picked her way amongst the prostrate forms of the bloodhounds, shuddering at their terrible appearance even in death. They reached a mossy bank, and there stretched out the wounded one, applying water to the wound, and dashing it in her face. Soon, with a deep sigh, she opened her eyes; at which Hortensia uttered a cry of joy, and gathered the sufferer to her bosom. It was not long before the flow of blood was stanchd, and Juanita looked gratefully into the faces of her friends. Tears streamed from their eyes — tears of mingled grief and joy. No word was spoken; theirs had hitherto been a silent love-making; it was more a loyal friendship, begun in mutual peril, cemented in danger. Each saw the other in the fiery glow of trials that had tested them to the utmost, and each had seen that neither had flinched.

“I must get down our articles in the tree,” he said, finally, “and try to find the horses. Cannot you and Juanita rest in the shade of these palms by the side of the stream, while I look them up?”

As he turned away, Juanita looked up inquiringly.

“What is it, dear?” asked Hortensia.

“Does he know?” she whispered with effort.



"THEY REACHED A MOSSY BANK, AND THERE STRETCHED OUT
THE WOUNDED ONE."

Hortensia nodded gravely. "Yes, my child. How could he help it? Your long hair tumbled all about your face; and—but he had said nothing. Did you not notice that he called you Juanita, instead of Juanito? That shows he knows; ah, but he has a woman's intuitions and delicacy too. He is strong, he is tender, he is modest and pure." Hortensia paused and blushed, for Juanita was staring at her in wide-eyed wonder.

"Ah, you love him," she whispered, with a child's candour.

And Hortensia did not deny it; but she gazed dreamily across the stream, saying to herself, "I wonder if I do?"

It was more than an hour before the Major returned and made himself visible; but it was not the first time he had been near to assure himself that they were in no danger. He led by the bridles all three of the runaways, who seemed glad to greet their owners once more, and whinnied nervously. They were little injured by their escapade, and the damage to their accoutrements was soon repaired. Securing them near the palms, the Major hesitated a moment, then said, "Would you—could you bring yourself to look at the man I shot? He is not far away; perhaps he may be some one you know. At least, he cannot harm you."

Hortensia recoiled at the suggestion, and her lover hastened to say, "No, no, perhaps it will not

be best. But I had thought, if we but knew who he was, we might be assured as to our future movements."

"That is true," she rejoined, bravely overcoming her aversion; "I will go with you; indeed, I think it may be most important. You will not be afraid to be left alone for a few minutes, Juanita? No? Then let us go." She laid her hand on the Major's arm, and together they went to look in the face of the dead. The man had been carefully stretched out by the one who had slain him, so that he appeared to be sleeping, rather than one in the embrace of death. His calm and even peaceful expression would have led one to believe him really wrapped in slumber. He was a man past middle life, large of frame and muscular, with a stern, dissipated countenance, and a brutal expression that even death could not soften.

Hortensia glanced at him, then averted her head and covered her eyes with her hands. "Ah, Mother of God! It is Don Celestino Rubio, brother to Eduardo, the one you captured in the cave."

The Major started, then gazed mournfully at the man he had deprived of life. "That explains much," he murmured. "Tell me, was he also the owner of the hounds?"

"Yes, and he valued them above all his other possessions. It is as well that you shot him, perhaps, for he would have pursued you till he

had avenged their death, even to the end of the world."

They returned to the side of Juanita in silence, each with thoughts too deep for expression, each lamenting the necessity that had brought them to this strait.

"Await me here; I have a sad duty to perform," said the Major, as he left Hortensia with her maid. Then returning to the corpse he dug a shallow grave with his machete, rolled the body into it, covered it reverently, and marked the tree nearest to it with a cross.

"The time may come when his friends may wish to give this man Christian burial, and I may have to guide them to it. Ah, how strange it will seem: to point out the grave of a man whom I mur — No, not that. Oh God, I am not a murderer! I was defending those entrusted to my care. There was no chance for parley, for averting the peril with which he menaced us, except I shot him. No, no, it cannot be that I would do such a thing in cold blood. It is not in me. Dear God, that deed was a necessity! His life or mine; not mine alone, — that would not have troubled me, — but that dear girl's which has been imperilled to rescue mine from death."

Thus communing with himself, the Major performed his gruesome task, and then went to survey the scene about the tree which had served them so

well as a temporary refuge. The huge hounds lay scattered about, in various shapes in which stiffening death had left them, hideous and repulsive even after life had fled. Their burial could serve no purpose; already the vultures were collecting on the trees above them and circling the air overhead. Hundreds were coming like smoke-streams from afar, and all tending hitherward.

"How soon they follow after death," thought the Major, gazing abstractedly at the loathsome birds as they fought for advantageous places at the coming feast. "If there were Indians in this forest now they would notice this gathering of the buzzards, and follow the trail. It is well for us there are not; if it were on the plains that this had happened, I should have had those cursed beasts under ground long before this, if possible. But before night there will not be a bone to pick, if these carrion crows continue to come in."

Corpses and carrion crows are not cheerful subjects for contemplation, and the Major may well be excused if he seemed moody and absent-minded as he returned to his friends by the bank of the stream.

Juanita was sleeping, her head resting in Hortensia's lap, her innocent face upturned towards the palm-branches overhead. Her nurse smiled up into the Major's eyes, and brought a gleam of sunshine into them.

"Sit down," she said, "and examine the wound,

please. The bullet came out at the back of the shoulder, and I have bandaged and bathed the spot since you left ; it seems to me not to be so bad as we at first feared." She reached up a hand and touched his fingers, the glance and the gentle touch sending a thrill of gladness through him.

He sat down beside them, and after a careful examination pronounced the child apparently out of danger. "She has wonderful vitality," he said ; "the impact of the bullet, with its terrible shock, would have been enough to have killed an ordinary person of her age. She reminds me of the Mestiza children I used to see in Mexico, whose Indian blood gave them a stronger constitution and hardier frame than the white children had. I should take her for one of them if I had met her casually, for she has all their characteristics."

"Ah, wise Major Carrolton," answered Hortensia, shaking a finger at the soldier, to his great delight ; "that is what she is, — a Mestiza, a descendant of the Indians who once lived in these very mountains. And, since her sex has been disclosed, I may add that she was my maid for awhile before this unfortunate escapade, — my especial protégé, — and that she was taking us to the haunts of her ancestors, of which she had kept the tradition — derived from her mother and grandmother — when we were so rudely compelled to halt. And," she continued, doubtfully, "don't you think we ought to be going on again?"

It is now quite noon, and we should get as far away as possible before another party sets out in search of us."

"Yes, indeed, now that you both are rested. I will first prepare a meal from the contents of our saddle-bags which you were so thoughtful as to bring along, and then we will venture another stage of the journey."

Making a fire with the dried stalks of the palm leaves which were scattered profusely over the ground, the Major soon had a can of hot broth and tin of chocolate ready for Juanita when she awoke, and spreading on the ground some broad leaves of the wild plantain, he set out an array of food from the saddle-bag stores which was quite tempting. All were refreshed by the repast, and when asked if she thought herself strong enough to continue the flight for a few hours longer, Juanita assented most eagerly.

"It is better," she whispered; "for it is not safe here. You have only to follow the stream. Leave me, if I am a burden, and go on."

"No, no, never!" cried both at once; "we will stay together to the end."

Within a half-hour, the beautiful though fateful glen had been left behind them, and they had entered upon the ascent of the forest-clothed mountain-side. Juanita half reclined in the Major's arms, her horse following behind Hortensia's; and thus they pursued their way for hours. The stream led them

through a deep and walled-in ravine, the steep rocks being topped with bristling trees, amongst which the Major's trained eye detected a stealthy movement, and close inspection revealed hundreds of human heads with long scalp-locks, and glistening eyes beneath, training towards him the stone-pointed shafts of numerous arrows!

CHAPTER XX.

A HUMAN SACRIFICE.

THE Major was helpless ; hemmed in between the walls of rock, supporting the wounded Juanita with one arm, with the other guiding his horse, he saw that they had been trapped, and that there was no way of escape. One less acquainted with barbaric weapons and modes of warfare might have looked with contempt upon those rude equipments of the foe, but he knew of what a straight-shafted, quartz-tipped arrow is capable, sent by the muscular arm of a brawny savage. For these were savages — that is, Indians — who surrounded them on every side, and now set up a yell that split the silence of the ravine like a knife.

They came pouring down tumultuously and yet with a certain deference to a tall, stalwart Indian of middle age, who seemed to direct the charge and govern the attack.

Calmly, yet with beating hearts, the trio awaited their coming. The Major had turned to reassure Hortensia, but he saw in her eyes no sign of fear or even of disquietude. Both she and Juanita were quietly waiting for events to shape themselves, seem-

ingly confident that all would be well in the end. Not so the Major, who, while fully assured of the futility of resistance, was yet calculating the chances of a determined rush for liberty, begun by a well-aimed discharge of rifle and revolver.

Hortensia may have divined this, for she held up a warning hand. "I do not think they will harm us," she said; "they are kin to Juanita in some way; she can speak their language."

Juanita feebly raised her head, just as the tall chief was laying hands upon the bridle of their horse. She uttered a single word; the hands dropped to the Indian's side, and he made an exclamation of surprise. Over his strong, swarthy visage drifted a look of compassion as she explained in low tones and broken sentences who they were and what was the object of their invasion of the Indian territory.

He held up his arms and told her to trust herself to him, at the same time taking her tenderly in his embrace. She would have clung to the Major, but recognised the wisdom of submitting to the Indian's requirements. His followers then had gathered about at respectful distances; perhaps one hundred and twenty men and youths, each one grasping a long bow and with a quiver of arrows slung over his shoulders. Besides the quiver, none of them wore anything except a breech-cloth of coarse cotton and perhaps a head-dress of feathers. The leader was more decorously dressed, with leg-

gings of fringed buckskin and a sleeveless tunic of cotton, in his black hair three eagle-feathers, a long, crystal-tipped spear carried in his right hand. Striding ahead with his burden, he signalled his men to follow, and they fell behind the chief and the prisoners, still maintaining a little space between themselves and him. They were beautiful examples of vigorous youth and manhood; every one lithe of limb and shapely, their frank, open faces wreathed in smiles, their speech soft and gestures amiable.

The Major fell back to Hortensia's side, and together they were carried along in the midst of their escort, hour after hour, climbing higher and higher, until their poor horses were nearly blown with the terrible exertion, and stopped every rod or so to breathe. The chief and Juanita were carrying on an animated, but desultory, conversation in the Indian tongue, and Juanita's face showed that she was not alarmed at the turn affairs had taken, for it was serene and calm.

At last, having climbed above the gigantic trees of the mid-mountain forest, they emerged upon a great plateau, where grass grew in abundance, streams gently coursed through meadows of waving rushes, and clumps of mountain palms dotted the landscape. Far, far away they could see the lower plains and forest-covered hills; but all was wild and savage, unbroken by sign of civilisation.

The Major had noticed, as they reached the verge of the forest, that the entrance into this great plain or mountain valley was through a narrow passage between high rocks, cliff-like and grand. And he also observed that it was guarded by sentinels, armed, like their captors, with bows, arrows, and spears, though two of them carried ancient arquebuses of a pattern used three hundred years ago. And, moreover, there on platforms of hewn rock were four equally ancient cannon, — bronze pieces, with serpent-adorned trunnions, and which might have come over from Spain with Cortez or De Soto.

The chief saw that the Major's attention was attracted by these antiquities, and after the gorge had been passed dropped back beside him, and in good but archaic Spanish briefly told him their history. It seems that a Spanish general, some time in the fifteenth century, learning that the Indians had fled to this retreat in the mountains, invaded the forest with a force of men and artillery. He never went back, nor were any of his men ever seen again by their countrymen. Led astray by false guides at first, then hemmed in and ambuscaded, the last of the Spaniards perished at the very verge of the Indian valley. "But," explained the chief, with a shrewd twinkle in his black eyes, "we did not kill the horses that drew the cannon, and we lured them on and on, until very near the spot you saw them; then we fell upon the remnant

of soldiers and put the last one to death. That was the last time our country was invaded ; no white man has ever been here since. Long ago we used the last pinch of powder, — long since fired the last arquebuse. Now we depend upon our arrows, spears and lances ; but we kill not much game, for our gardens and the fields and the forests give us enough for our wants."

"But I thought — all the world believes — that the last of the Indians were killed by the Spaniards many, many years ago," said the Major.

"Yes? That is good ; that is why we have been preserved, instead of being hunted like beasts as our ancestors were. It was in Cacique Hauetey's time that, believing the end was near, our fathers assembled together and took counsel of wisdom. They fled to these mountains, and the Spaniards believed they had all committed suicide, as, indeed, many of the Indians had. Ever since we have lived here, shut in from the world, knowing nothing of what the world has done for more than three hundred years. You are the first invaders ; it was predicted long, long ago that you and the beautiful woman by your side should come ; that you should arrive on the eve of an important festival ; so we went down to meet you, and lo, here you are ! You will never return, neither you nor your lovely companion, but you will not be prisoners ; no, as free as the air around us, you shall be, until — "

Into the face of the chief had crept an expression inexplicable at first ; then, with a shudder, the Major recalled its character : it was the stare of one who gloats over a vision of death ! Like a flash of light it was revealed to him : the character of the festival they were to take part in. They were to be sacrificed like the victims of Aztec superstition ; like the fair youth who at first was worshipped as a god and then offered on the sacrificial stone, his heart torn out, his skin flayed from his quivering flesh.

The Major looked at his innocent companion, in whose face was set the star of peace, and resolved that, whatever might befall, she should not suffer death at the hands of these savages. Into his eyes came infinite pity, which she, mistaking for infinite love, reflected back to him from her pure, untroubled soul. There need be no immediate alarm, however, and so the lover quieted his rising fears.

"When does the festival take place ?" he asked the chief, "and what part do we take in it ?"

"To-morrow ; you yourself take no part. It is the maiden, your companion, — she will be the one destined for honours surpassing any others we can bestow. She will be purified by the fire-test, and her soul, passing aloft to heaven in the vapours, will take our message to the Cacique of the universe."

"Well, you are frank enough, at all events," replied the Major, with a curl of his lip. But this fine cynicism was lost upon the chief.

"Suppose," added the lover, suppressing a desire to throw himself on the chief and strangle him, "suppose the maiden does not desire to take the test by fire. She may not wish it."

"That will not matter," cheerfully rejoined the savage; "she will have to do it. Our oracles have ordained that she be the victim."

"But," persisted the Major, "a message to the gods carried by an unwilling victim, will certainly miscarry, — will surely produce an effect contrary to what you desire. The gods may punish you for it."

The chief halted and scratched his head. The subtleties of the white man's reasoning were too abstruse for his comprehension. A doubtful look came into his countenance.

"Perhaps you are right; but I will consult with our priest when we reach the village. However, you can have no objections to such a transfiguration as the maiden would undergo. Think! it would be the highest honour she could receive on earth. If it were my sister that had been selected, I should rejoice; if it were myself, I should be very glad. Only a brief suffering in the flames, then an eternity of bliss, with power to bring to her all those on earth whom she would elect to share her paradise."

"Ridiculous!" it was on the tip of the Major's tongue to exclaim; but the savage was in such deadly earnest, was so thoroughly imbued with the idea that the fiery ordeal must take place, that the lover trem-

bled in spite of himself. Hortensia was a little ahead, out of ear-shot, conversing with Juanita, who had been placed on her horse, so she had not heard this discussion of her terrible fate.

One would have thought, looking at the calm, dignified savage, striding along at the side of the horseman, and at the earnest, though energetic, gestures of the Major, that they were conversing upon some subject of every-day interest merely. But, knowing Indian character as he did, the Major knew that it would be in vain to openly combat their arguments ; only by suggestion and indirection, with a hint here and an insinuation there, could they be moved to doubt their own wisdom. As to force, — surrounded as he was by hundreds of savages and in their own territory, — it was out of the question. So the Major beat his brains for some reasonable and conclusive refutation of their fallacious and dangerous idea. Now an idea is the most dangerous enemy one can encounter in the midst of savagedom. It is so seldom that the savage has an idea, that once he gets it into his brain there it lodges, fixed and immovable. You can't pry it out with a crowbar, or hoist it out with a derrick, unless you can first insinuate another idea as an entering wedge. But, there being no room in the aboriginal brain for two ideas at once, it requires great address and consummate cunning to introduce the second so effectually as to oust the first.

This was the problem that occupied the Major the remaining portion of the day, and which made him appear moody and silent, even to his friends: he had set himself to overmatch the savage in sophistry; he was playing a game, the stake being his sweetheart's precious life, and he was determined he would win or perish with her; but at the same time he resolved to outwit the enemy.

As the sun sank behind the great brown cliffs around the plateau the cavalcade sighted the smoke of the Indian village, which was clustered beneath the tree-besprinkled rocks. Their welcome was as cordial as one could have desired. Pretty brown-skinned maidens took Hortensia and Juanita to a large hut, which had been specially prepared against their coming, such faith the people had in the predictions of their priests! Ablutions and sweet incense refreshed the weary maidens, and a sage old woman dressed Juanita's wound with a healing poultice of herbs, and gave her a drink that eased the pain. The Major was allowed to say good-night at the door of Hortensia's dwelling, then taken to another hut at a little distance away. He had no fears for the night; but for the morrow, — he clenched his hands and knit his brows, — the morrow was to be the fateful day. His sweetheart was as yet all unconscious; for he had secured the chief's promise to keep her in ignorance of the trial by fire until the very last moment.

But the night passed, and the morning opened bright and beautiful. No sleep had visited the Major's eyelids during the night, but his eyes were bright and his brow serene. He had perfected his plan, and it was very simple : to make one last effort for reprieve ; then, if he failed, to shoot himself, after having placed his sweetheart beyond all danger from the savages. The ceremony was to take place two hours after dawn. The priests had decided against the objection to Hortensia's fitness for a messenger to the deity, and she was to die. The chief had told him this at midnight, after the secret conclave in their *estufa*. In the center of the little plaza was a mountain-heap of pine and gum wood ; executioners were ready to lead the victim thither ; the whole population was assembled ; all eyes were turned towards the door of Hortensia's dwelling ; it opened, and a hush as of death fell upon the expectant Indians.

CHAPTER XXI.

HIS SWEETHEART'S PRECIOUS LIFE.

HORTENSIA stood in the doorway ; the rising sun just illumined the village, and touched her face with a golden gleam. She was pale, but calm ; her night-black eyes shone like stars ; her long tresses fell waist-length over her white shoulders and around her face. She was garbed in white, in a loose robe drawn around her waist with a golden cord. At her side was Juanita, also in white, holding one hand in hers. Both saw the funeral pyre, but neither seemed to feel apprehension, and their gaze was fixed inquiringly upon the chief and the priests, who were standing beneath a great sapadilla-tree, twenty paces distant from the hut. At the side of the chief stood Major Carrolton, erect and confident, booted and spurred, armed with every weapon he had brought with him into the mountain valley.

The simple Indians were so dominated by their one idea that they had not thought of any other ; they did not take into account the possible attempt of their guests to escape or to cause bloodshed. Naturally, they were innocent and good-hearted, disinclined to shed blood, and only taking to arms

when hard pressed. But they were under the dominance of their priests, and these had told them that a sacrifice was necessary for their well-being. They knew, and the common people did not, so of course they must be right! They wished to be informed regarding an important question; the time had come, and the messenger to go to heaven and inquire whether or no they should still live on here in seclusion, or venture to mingle once more with their ancient enemies. The messenger must be one uncontaminated, — in fact, must be purified. They could think of no method more efficacious than fire for purification, hence the ordeal. They saw in Hortensia a rare and beautiful woman, far superior to any they had ever looked upon; her arrival, too, was opportune; so they could form no other conclusion than that she was to be the celestial messenger who was to pass through fire to the clouds.

A murmur of admiration ran through the multitude, and many prostrated themselves in homage to her beauty. The chief turned to the two men whose office it was to bind the victim to the stake and light the pyre, and they made as if about to go and seize her, when the Major reached forth and held each man by the shoulder.

“Stay!” he said to the astonished chief, and swinging around the men so as to face him. “Tell me what is the sign that the messenger has reached the great Cacique on high; what is the token?”

"The token? It shall be his sacred emblem with which she will return."

"Yes, but what is it?"

The chief consulted with the priests; they were evidently uneasy; but they nodded, and he approached and whispered in the Major's ear, — "It is too sacred to be mentioned in public; it is —." Here he lowered his voice in awe, but the words were what the Major had expected. He flung the men away from him so violently that they toppled over and then lay prostrate on the ground, regarding him dumbly and in wonder. Still there was no movement amongst the priests or the people; they seemed wholly dominated by this one strong stranger, who worked his will as he chose.

"Look you!" thundered the Major, striding forth and standing between the group of priests and the maidens, still awaiting their pleasure in the doorway of the hut. "Look you, my friends, who seek a sign from Heaven! Is not this maiden beautiful? Does not purity and virtue shine in her countenance?"

There were murmurs of assent coming from every side. The people were interested.

"Yes, you can see that; it is open to all; she is pure and good. Can one like this need to pass through fire in order to be purified? Is she not pure already?"

The assenting murmurs grew in volume; even the

priests, though they did not approve of this interruption, not dissenting.

"Then, why this ordeal? It is not necessary. More, — this maiden has already passed it! Yes, in anticipation of your desires, she has been through the purifying flame. And yet more: she has the sacred symbol!"

"Blasphemer!" It was an aged priest who spoke as he rose, tottering, and pointed at the American a warning finger. "Blasphemer, beware! She must now produce that emblem of the great Cacique, or both you and she shall surely pass through the fire!"

The people were excited, two different factions promptly forming: one in favour of, and the other against the strangers. The Major calmly faced them, and when their cries had subsided, and they had ceased brandishing their lances, clubs, and arrows, he spoke again.

First, however, he said in a low tone to the chief and the priests, "Shall she show this symbol to the people?"

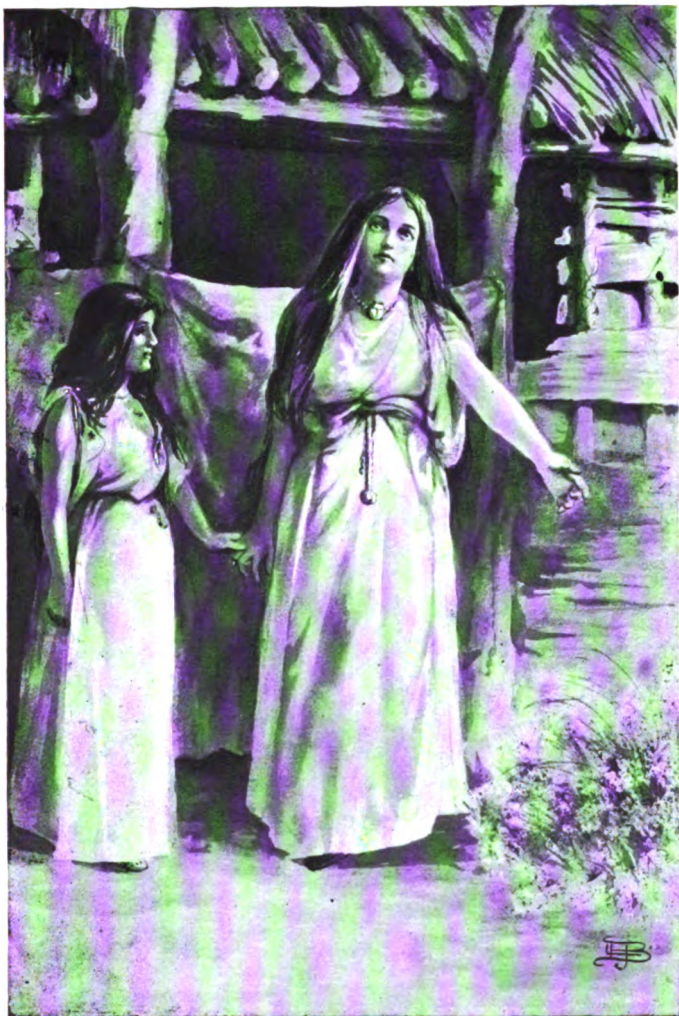
And the chief, answering for the sacerdotal group, said, with a sneer curling his lip, "Yes, let her show it to the people."

The Major turned to Hortensia and addressed her in English, a tongue the Indians had never heard spoken, — "When I turn again, take your hand from your throat and let them see the brooch."

Then he said, in low but penetrating tones that reached to the outermost verge of the encircling multitude, — "Since you desire it, so shall it be. But blame me not if the Gods regard this as a profanation. Behold — the sacred symbol of the great Cacique!"

So saying, he turned again to his sweetheart, standing patiently awaiting his will and the decision of the Indian priests, and she let fall the hand which all the while she had kept at her throat. Profound silence fell upon the great throng during a full minute's space, then there was a rustling as of an army of locusts on the wing, followed by the clash of lance and arrow-head, as the people, following the lead of their chief and the priests, cast themselves prone upon the ground. The aged priest was the first to rise, and he, slowly, tremulously, crouching half to earth, advanced till he could touch the hem of Hortensia's robe, where, halting, with hands outstretched in adoration, he gazed long and lingeringly at the symbol, and into the pale, sweet face held haughtily above it.

It was a trying ordeal, but she stood it bravely; yet the tears gathered, and fell in diamond drops adown her cheeks and robe. She held out her hands supplicatingly to her lover, as if to ask him to end it quickly, before her strength forsook her; and the priest, mistaking the gesture for a blessing, rose, and reverently returned to his colleagues. Then



"SHE LET FALL THE HAND WHICH ALL THE WHILE SHE HAD
KEPT AT HER THROAT."

the Major, who had stood aside, the only one in the audience erect, signed her to retire ; and when the people looked up neither she nor her maid was visible.

Again there rose the rustling as of the wings of a locust army, followed by the clashing of recovered spears and arrows, as the people, at their chief's command, resumed their former positions. Holding towards them the hand of authority, he exclaimed, — “My people, you have at last seen it, that which for three centuries our fathers and ourselves have so long desired, — the *Golden Scarab of the Great Cacique !*”

Then there was great rejoicing, and headed by the priests, the people formed processions, carrying palm branches ; it was high noon before the tumult subsided and they had resumed their vocations, some going hunting, others tilling the soil, and still others seeking for fruits and flowers to offer to the new divinity.

As for the genius who had evoked this demonstration, and had diverted the people from their fell purpose, — as for the Major, he maintained his gravity, but with effort ; and there might have been seen lurking beneath his heavy moustache a grim smile of self-gratulation. He was consumed with desire to visit and converse with Hortensia, but felt that their self-assumed dignities would not permit of such a sudden descent from their pedestals.

There seemed a disposition among the people to deify the Major, as well as their goddess; but he finally convinced them that he was but her subaltern agent, and not worthy divine honours. So they compromised by letting him severely alone, with a tacit understanding that he was to go where he pleased and do as he liked, which was an arrangement entirely to his satisfaction.

But — "What a tangled web we weave, when first we venture to deceive!" Later in the day, after having set off the pyre in token that all the past was entirely obliterated, as the smoke of it was drifting like a pall across the cliff-line, the chief and his ecclesiastical cronies called at the Major's hut on an important mission. In short, they assumed that, inasmuch as the maiden had the scarab, of course she also had, and would soon communicate, the message from the great Cacique beyond the clouds!

The Major was taken somewhat aback at this peremptory request, but recovered himself sufficiently to assure them that he would communicate with the goddess, and probably deliver the message on the following day. Then they took their departure, with mutual expressions of respect, not to say admiration, after requesting his wishes as to the immediate future.

He now saw his way clear to visit and communicate with Hortensia, and soon despatched his ser-

vant (a little shock-headed Indian boy) with a note requesting her to name an early hour for an interview. The divinity had by that time fully recovered from the fatigues of the morning, had partaken of a delightful repast, and been bathed and gowned by her devoted Juanita, so that the answer returned to the note was altogether satisfactory.

In truth, half an hour had not elapsed before the Major was knocking at the door of the hut. This is more a figure of speech than an actuality, for the "door" consisted of a swinging mat hung half way up the door-posts, and over which any one as tall as the Major would have had no difficulty whatever in looking.

It may be imagined that the lovers had to exercise great restraint to prevent a mutual display of affection which might have been disastrous to their newly-assumed rôle of communicators with the deity. As it was, they devoured each other with their eyes and sighed most forlornly, until poor little Juanita felt more uncomfortable than she had ever felt before in her life. As there was more or less danger in speech, they resorted to writing, and thus made their apparent communication all the more mysterious.

"You played your part to perfection," wrote the Major; "and I was not the only one who thought you divine. You imposed upon every one — even the old priests and the chief."

"Flatterer!" wrote Hortensia; "I felt anything

but divine, I assure you, standing there a full hour in the morning sun ; and if I did my part well, it was on account of the coaching you gave me when you ran such risk, and came to the hut between two and three o'clock in the morning. But what was it all about ? Why were the people all assembled, and what was that great stack of wood for, which they have since set fire to and sent off in smoke ?”

“Oh, that was part of the ceremony, and the golden beetle is another part. And by the way, the priests have taken you for a messenger from their great Cacique, as they call the chiefest of their deities, and they now insist upon the message he has sent them in your care. We will have to concoct one now ; or, if you can tell a little lie, and — stick to it, — leave it to me, and give them to understand that all your communications from the Cacique are only obtainable through me.”

“Certainly, that will satisfy me, Carlos ; and it will give me frequent opportunity for consulting you, will it not ? And would that be agreeable to you ? And what am I to do with the beetle ? It was given me, you know, and I ought not to part with it ; but this, I fancy, will be a case of necessity, will it not ?”

“Yes, indeed,” the Major wrote in answer, “Yes, to all your inquiries. As to the beetle : it must be given to the priests ; and, as I had the honour of finding it before presenting it to you, you shall be absolved.”

They were standing close together, and somehow their hands had found each other's company agreeable, it would seem, by the manner in which they clung, with fingers intertwined. If they had had any eyes for other things, they might have seen that Juanita had discreetly turned her back, and was looking out over the door; but they said their adieus very formally, and thus lost a golden opportunity!

CHAPTER XXII.

A MYSTERIOUS ARRIVAL.

THE golden beetle, one of the ornaments recovered by the Major and his friends in the cavern at the Yunque, and which had been presented to Hortensia, was the sacred emblem of the Cacique, or last earthly chief of the Indians of Cuba. Previous to his departure he had called his people together and bade them farewell; he told them that it might be many, many years before he should return to them, and that the sign of his coming, or of any communication he should make with them, would be the golden scarab, which had been wrought by native goldsmiths out of virgin gold. This, then, was the object which greeted the eyes of priests and people as Hortensia let fall her hand from her throat, where the beetle-brooch had been concealed.

Tradition, carefully repeated from father to son, had preserved the exact image of the sacred scarab, and the Indians did not doubt its identity. Knowing nothing, either of the depository of the Cacique's treasure, or of its discovery by the white men, they implicitly believed the story told them by the Major :

that it had been sent by the hand of the pale-faced maiden whom they had predestined to die by fire. It was a lie, of course ; but it was a good one, and told in a good cause, so the two confederates had no scruples about the telling of it.

The difficulty now was to maintain the deception, — to keep up their characters as supernatural visitants without committing any error which might lead to detection. The rôle had been forced upon them, so they but assumed it as a means of self-preservation. On the day succeeding the fiery ordeal, the golden scarab was delivered to the priests, together with the message from on high, which was to the effect that, if the Indians wished to preserve themselves from extermination, they should remain concealed in their stronghold yet another decade, or until another message should acquaint them with the Cacique's wishes. Meanwhile, they should still pursue the paths of peace, carefully refrain from committing bloodshed, and endeavour to improve their material and moral condition. This message the Major had spent half the night in engraving upon another golden beetle (the smooth back of which made a good surface), and the two sacred emblems were deposited upon the rude altar in the *estufa*, or holy of holies, guarded by the priests. Then all the chief men assembled in their council-hall, and the purport of the message was communicated to them.

It was then agreed, upon motion of the aged priest, that, if the new-comers would accept the responsibilities of royalty, they should be invited to rule over the tribe. The pale-faced maiden should be their queen, and the strong man her prime minister. These new honours were thrust upon them so urgently that there was no denying them. That very day, before the hour of noon, they were informed of their election to supreme command, and that very day, before the sun had set, the happy Indians had commenced an immense structure which was to serve as their palace and place of residence.

They first erected a vast platform, about one hundred feet long by sixty wide, and upon this raised the wattled walls of two detached houses, the common roof of which they thatched with palm-leaves. One was for the queen, the other for her prime minister; and their train of servitors were lodged in small houses connected at the rear of the larger establishment, which was surrounded by a broad veranda, and with a covered way between the queen's house and the minister's.

There was unrestricted communication, save under the espionage of the innocent and round-eyed youngsters, maids and boys, a dozen or so of whom had been appointed to wait upon the queen and her friend. But they were watched, nevertheless, and were under the jealous scrutiny of their subjects, who, though without suspicion, had their own ideas

of how a queen and her prime minister ought to behave. But they had not reckoned upon either one or both these worthies being in love, nor reckoned upon that centripetal force which, no matter how much they might wish to observe the aboriginal convenances, constantly hurled them together.

It was a great concession for the queen to allow her prime minister to call on her twice a day, and to press her hand fondly at parting; but as a single veranda surrounded their quarters, and as there was no visible line of demarcation, she could not prevent him from sitting very near her house and casting longing glances in her direction. These she could not well avoid, as the heat necessitated her constant presence in the open air; and then again, there was no one else to talk to, save Juanita, who had not the vast fund of entertaining anecdotes, nor the ready sympathy of the Major. So the queen just let matters arrange themselves, making one or two ineffectual protests, as a concession to dignity.

Their duties were not arduous; in fact, they hardly had any duties at all. Never were a ruler and her prime minister called upon to preside over a more peaceable people, nor more loving subjects. They vied with each other as to who should bestow the most and greatest favours, from the chief to the lowest subject, and heaped upon the broad veranda testimonials of their good-will, such as breadfruits, pineapples, tobacco, guavas, and mangos, crayfish

from the mountain brooks, and land-crabs from their holes beneath the rocks. All nature, in fact, was laid under tribute, and the broad table which the Major had made and set up in the covered interspace of the veranda was heaped with dainties. Their meals they partook of together, and, it is needless to say, they were prolonged to the latest minute possible; and when at last the time came for the nightly parting, it was with reluctance that the Major allowed his sweetheart to retire to her own apartments.

Juanita, whose wound was healing rapidly under the care of the old Indian doctress, was inseparable from her mistress, yet seemed equally attached to her mistress's lover, and was happy in their company.

Thus the time wore away; monotonously inactive, the Major pined for more active employment. But two months went by before he ventured to broach to Hortensia a plan for escape, and then she promptly decided against it.

She would like, she said, to see her sister again; indeed, she felt quite lost without her, but she could not consent to run the risks of returning through the forests, — the terrible trackless woods, where they would be exposed to the dangers, not only of recapture, but of those which had beset them on their coming hither.

"And don't you see, Carlos," she said, with a pretty pout, which is very becoming to one with

whom one is in love, and particularly in a queen, "Don't you see that I should never have another chance of being a ruler in my own right again? And don't you see, also, stupid Prime Minister, that you would never, never have a ghost of a chance to stand so near to a real sovereign again as you do to me?"

"Yes, that is it," muttered the Prime Minister; "I really like you better as plain Hortensia Delgado than as a queen over these barbaric savages. I would rather dwell with you alone, in some poor hut, than have to be so deferential, to conceal my real feelings, — to smother my love for you. I can't endure it longer, I cannot; either we leave together, or else I will leave you alone, and forever."

The Queen was astonished, grieved, and was about to protest against this rebellious declaration of her Prime Minister, when their attention was attracted by the approach of a body of Indian horsemen, guarding in their midst a white prisoner securely tied to the back of his beast. It was then near sundown, and very pleasant on the veranda where the twain were sitting; and so much absorbed were they in each other, that they did not notice the approach of the cavalcade until it was close upon them. The weary white man threw up his hands at sight of them, and uttered an exclamation of joy and relief.

The Queen, whose attention had been attracted

by the exclamation, rose and advanced hurriedly to the edge of the veranda with outstretched hands, and cried out to the Major, "Why, it is the Doctor!"

"That's a fact," said the man in the saddle; "what there is left of him, after being run through these blamed forests for two days and nights, without sleep or rest. Say, what do these miserable redskins mean by such treatment, hey? Just ask 'em to untie my legs, will you, Major? You seem to be high muck-a-muck here, and perhaps you'll see that justice is done me. Well, how are you all, anyhow?" continued the Doctor, as he mounted to the veranda and saluted Hortensia.

"Glad to see me, you say? Well, I don't know. But here I am, large as life and twice as natural. Thought I was dead? I thought the same about you, so we're quits on that score. But first tell me who that old tan-coloured thief is, who seems to be master of ceremonies. He's been jabbering at me, and pointing at you here, and making a sight of himself generally. Call him up here, won't you, and ask him what he means by it all, and who he took me for, will you?"

The chief gladly came up, and explained that he was responsible for it all. "I sent my trusty men, those there, down to the coast for a priest, that you, my queen and king, might be married; and lo, as luck would have it, they found one wandering in the

woods, — a holy man, but fractious, and given to strange speech, — and here he is, and on the morrow you are to be married.”

“What? What does he say, Carlos? He sent for a priest to marry us? How very absurd!” Hortensia blushed deeply and turned to her Prime Minister, who reddened guiltily. “Carlos, did you put this scheme in his mind?”

“No, of a truth; this is the first I have heard of it.”

“Oh, ho!” shouted the Doctor, who had gained an inkling of the conversation. “You shouldn’t get mad with the poor Indian for that. He saw something was lacking to make you happy, and so acted the part of Cupid. By Jove, that’s rich: an Indian Cupid, with his little bow and arrow! He’s a rum one, he is. Shake, old man; I’m proud to make your acquaintance. You’re a genuine old terra-cotta, and no mistake!”

The chief grinned delightedly, and invited the Doctor off for a “snifter,” as the latter called it, of cocoa-water; and when they returned they were the best friends in the world.

“Now,” said the Doctor, settling himself on a seat, “I s’pose you want to hear all the news? It’s a long story, but soon told. Thanks, I will take a cigar. Good article, that. What? Made here on the spot, from tobacco of your own raising? Look here! his nibs has told me something of your lay-

out : reg'lar soft snap, — Miss Hortensia queen, and the Major prime minister ! Sly old dog, Major, eh ? Say, why can't you make me assistant prime, eh ? We'll have these red sinners all civilised inside of six months, importing the latest styles from Paris, and canned goods from the States."

"I'm afraid you wouldn't be content here long," laughed the Major and Hortensia in a breath ; "but if there is any office vacant you shall have it."

"Thanks, awfully ; but now, as I know you're dying to hear all the happenings since we parted, if you'll give me your ears, — as the Turk said to the Cretan, — I'll begin to unravel my yarn. Well, soon after you left the camp, Major, on that eventful night, I said farewell to the ladies, and set out on your trail. I saw it wasn't any use loafing around the camp after you'd left, and thought if I could find a smuggler or filibuster on the coast going to Florida I'd take passage in her for home. But I missed your trail and took a wrong one ; that is, the wrong one for meeting with you, but the right one for me in the end, for it led me to the harbour of Tanamo, to the westward of Moa, and there, as good luck would have it, I found a schooner just about to set sail for Florida. It didn't take long to strike a bargain with the captain of the vessel, to turn my horse loose on the beach, and jump into the boat in waiting to take us off. Well, in short, I reached Indian Key just as the filibuster the Professor had taken

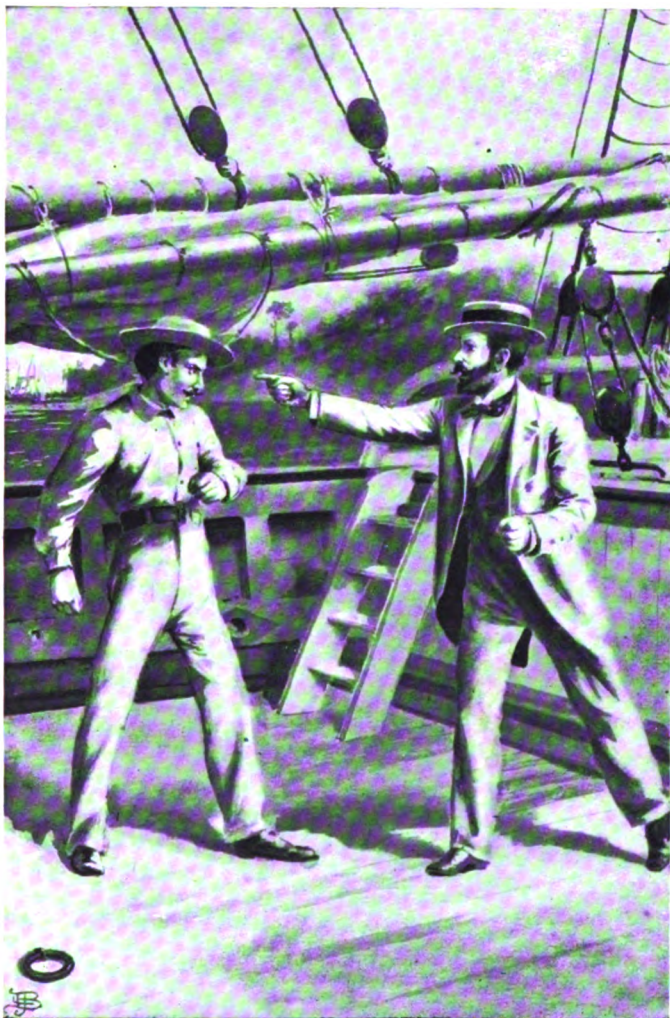
passage in was furling its sails. She had her flag at half-mast, so the first thing I did was to board her and find out that the old man had been lost overboard the very night after they'd left the Cuban coast!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

AN ELOPEMENT OF ROYALTY.

“OH, no, Doctor, not that!” cried Hortensia. “Our worst fears verified,” said the Major, gloomily. “But I had hoped for better news of my dear friend. Oh, if I had but caught the vessel in port!”

“Yes, that’s what they told me: ‘Lost overboard at night,’” continued the Doctor. “Well, just as I boarded the schooner, there stood Señor Rubio; and he wasn’t any too glad to see me, you bet. He just gave one yell and jumped ashore, and then ran as though the fiends were after him. I didn’t let any grass grow, you know, and put out after him like all possessed, and he took to the mangroves. They grow right down to the water at the Key, and are as thick as spider-webs, and the mud beneath ’em is about two feet deep. But I kept right along, cutting a pretty good stick, until I caught up with our friend in a bight of the bay. I had my revolver in hand, but before I could stop him, he let fly a shot that took me in the shoulder, — cut a bit out of my coat, but didn’t more’n graze the skin; so I let him have it back again, and, — I’m sorry to have to report it,



“‘HE WASN’T ANY TOO GLAD TO SEE ME.’”

Miss Hortensia, but you know it was his life or mine,—and my rule has always been to look out for Number One, and —”

“Oh, poor Rubio! Did you kill him? Don't say you did, Doctor, for he was my friend in childhood; he had many faults, but a good heart.” And Hortensia burst into tears, seeing the truth in the Doctor's set and rigid countenance.

“Yes, it would not have happened if he had not forced me to do it. He breathed his last a little after I reached him. He told me that he had pushed the Professor overboard; but he had thrown him a life-preserver, and perhaps, after all, he had succeeded in getting ashore, or in reaching a passing vessel. Then, with a smile on his handsome face, he gave up the ghost.” The narrator paused, for his voice was husky; silence fell upon them, broken only by Hortensia's sobs.

“Yes,” continued the Doctor, meditatively, “the men from the schooner came up, just as he—as he ceased talking, and helped me take him back. We buried him on shore, and I was taken before a coroner's jury and acquitted, after I had told them the why and wherefore of it. Then, on showing the proper papers, the Professor's baggage was turned over to me, and I was given a clean bill of health. Everything was all right, so I left the whole outfit with the collector of the port, and took the next vessel for the coast of Cuba. And now I've got

a glad surprise for you. I don't like to do the 'Jeremiah' business worth a cent, and I'm mighty glad to ring in a cheerful change. We landed at the port of Manati, some distance to westward of where we first struck Cuban soil months ago, and the first thing I saw, as I leaped ashore, was a familiar figure walking along the beach, with his head bent and his hands behind his back."

"The Professor?" cried the Major.

"The same, or else a mighty good imitation of his ghost. I walked up and slapped him on the back, and he looked up with that air of mild astonishment of his, and said, 'Oh, you are that frivolous young man who pulled teeth!' That made me mad; but I didn't let on that I was, and I merely said, 'And you are the old fool that doesn't know enough to stay on the deck of a vessel, eh?'

"With that he looked at me critically, and then said, 'Young man, do you know when and how I can get to Indian Key, Florida?' 'Yes, sir,' I replied, 'by that vessel I just came on; and you will find the Cacique's treasure in care of the customs collector. Give him this paper and he'll deliver it to you. But,' I added, 'you'd better tie it around your neck; for children like you ain't fit to be trusted out over night.' So I gave him an order on the collector for the baggage, and he promised to dispose of the treasure to the best advantage for you all; and I don't doubt he'll do so; for no matter how simple

the old man is, he's honest, — I'll gamble my grandmother on that. But he's a corker, the old Professor is; he never asked after you nor any of us, except Miss Hortensia."

"And did he remember to ask after me?" said the Queen, delighted.

"Oh, yes; he said, with that abstracted air of his, 'By the way, what became of that little girl my friend Major Carrolton was so much interested in? I'm afraid he may commit some foolishness.'"

"The horrid man!" exclaimed the Queen, "as though the Major could."

"And with you, Miss Hortensia, — I mean your Majesty, — it would have been impossible," said the Doctor gallantly, but with a covert sneer.

"Yes, my dear Doctor, impossible," said the Major, warmly.

"Whatever may eventuate from our acquaintance will be in accordance with the dictates of our highest intelligence."

"Oh, yes, of course! couldn't be anything else. I've been in the same fix myself, — couldn't see anything but perfection and that sort of thing. It's lovely while it lasts; and *sometimes* it lasts a lifetime."

"Please don't digress, Doctor," urged Hortensia, who scented a possible quarrel between her two admirers; "kindly tell us the rest of the story."

"All right. Where was I? Oh, yes, I'd dis-

posed of two of the actors in this drama. Now I'll get rid of the rest in a lump. Well, I lit out for the interior, where Maceo then was, right opposite Monati, after I had seen the last of the Professor. I met up with the command inside of two days, and found everybody well and lively."

"My sister? Did you see Lolita? And was she well?"

"Yes, whole outfit in best of health. But she was worrying about you. A mountaineer had come down and reported a pack of hounds dead, up in the Crystals, and no sign of you or your maid, or the Major. So I said I'd just put out in search of you, and here I am. And that's about the size of my story; and there isn't much more to tell."

"And so you came in search of us, though your modesty wouldn't let you own it? I believe there *is* some good in you, after all, Doctor. "

"Some good? Why, my sweet Queen, I'm good 'way through. It's that confounded modesty of mine that has prevented me from getting on in the world. If it wasn't for my native modesty and retiring nature, I might now be occupying the position of Prime Minister to her Majesty, Queen Hortensia. As it is, another has that desirable office, and I am left lamenting."

"Oh, I fancy you are not lamenting much," said Hortensia, playfully tapping the Doctor with her fan. "But if it will set your mind at rest, I will confess

that I never had any inclination toward any other man, either as Prime Minister, or prime favourite, than the present incumbent."

"Well, that does relieve my mind of a load of doubt, and I'm glad it's your first offence, so to speak. However, we'll leave that subject for the present, for it is a tender one with me, with my heart bleeding, as it were, over my rejection. But now, honest Injun, I'm going to do you two a service that will prove everlastingly that your friend the Doctor can overlook an injury and forgive a slight. Now while it may seem to you that the best thing you can do is to stay right here, yet I'd advise you both to get out. It's attractive, I'm bound to confess: little kingdom all to yourselves, loving subjects, nothing to do but enjoy yourselves, select society, — what's the matter with that, anyway? If you're not happy now you never will be, in my opinion."

"We are happy," said both at once, and with loving glances at each other; "but —"

"Yes, that's it. There's that 'but' in the way. To be happy you must be free. And, loving each other as you two do, you ought to be married. As the poet says:

'Always to court, never to wed,
Happiest life ever was led.'

But the poet ought to know well enough that it can't be done. Now I propose that we all — elope!"

"Elope?" queried his astonished friends.

"Yes, indeed. The Major elopes with the Queen, and I—well, I'll elope with little Juanita, your Indian maiden there. In fact, we'll all go off together, and when we get to some civilised country you two can be married, and we two will be 'best man' and bridesmaid. How is that?"

"But we can't get away," said the Major. "We're here for life, I'm afraid. If the old chief detected any intention of our leaving, he wouldn't hesitate to pepper us full of arrows, I'm sure."

"Nonsense," rejoined the Doctor, airily. "Leave that old redskin to me. We'll take him along with us, in fact, and make him pilot us out of the wilderness."

"I don't know," answered the Major, dubiously. "You see we have a duty to perform towards these people. In the first place, the white inhabitants of Cuba know nothing of this Indian settlement; and if they should find it out, especially if the Spaniards should, our poor friends would be killed,—murdered without mercy. You may tell Hortensia's sister how you found us, Doctor; but not a word to any one else. Do you understand?"

"Trust me! mum's the word. Wild horses can't yank it out of me. But say, by this time to-morrow we must be on the way out of the woods. You may be Queen's assistant and all that, but in this case I'm going to be commander-in-chief. And if I don't

bring you out all right, you may take my head for a foot-ball. As to the old chief, I'll fix him. I'll go see him now, in fact, and you two get ready to go."

In short — without wasting further words on the subject — the next morning at sunrise a little cavalcade left the newly-erected palace, escorted by a picked company of the Indian braves armed with their ancient arquebuses and their bows and arrows.

"It was just this way," said the Doctor to his friends, as they were well on the way out of the valley: "I said to the old chief, said I, — that is, as well as I could, by signs, — 'If you don't let your Queen and her Prime Minister go down to the coast, they can't get married; and if they can't get married they don't want to stay, — see?'"

"The old man grunted and scratched his head, and after he'd got his mind open for another idea, I said, 'Now you know I'm not a priest, nor a parson, and I can't marry 'em, — see?' He grunted again, and then asked me the question I wanted him to: 'Who can?'"

"Then I knew I had him, for I answered, 'Well, there's a good and holy man down on the coast, and he's a friend of mine; and if you'll just give us an escort, why, we'll all light out for his house, get the happy couple spliced, and then I'll go my way and you can bring 'em back to live here, — see?'"

"The old man went off to consult with his priests,

and soon came back, and said, quite cheerfully, that he was agreeable, and so it was fixed. But, between you and me, Major, I don't quite like the alacrity with which he assented. It appears to me that he meditates treachery, and so we'd better keep an eye on him and his warriors. Your revolver is loaded, isn't it, and your rifle, too? Yes? Well, just keep 'em handy where you can grab 'em at a minute's warning, for I believe we're going to have trouble."

The Major hardly agreed with his friend as to the Indian's treachery; but he did note a sullen look in the old chief's eyes which would have warned him, even if the Doctor had not mentioned his suspicions. The truth was that the chief had suspected *them* of treachery, and, having inherited a suspicious nature from his long years of watchfulness, and knowing the terrible consequences if his secret were betrayed, he had resolved to make it impossible for these white folk to bring trouble to his tribe. In short, he would watch them sharply, and if necessary shoot them down at once if his suspicions were confirmed.

"I'm very grateful to you," said the Major to the Doctor, "for not telling Hortensia about the Colonel's death the night before our escape from the camp at the Crystals. It was very tactful of you; for you must know, she hasn't learned of it yet."

"Yes, that's so; she'll find it out soon enough, poor girl, if we ever escape from this mountain prison. I

think we shall, but we mustn't let the old chief get the upper hand. Watch and wait, that's all we can do. We're better armed than he is, anyway."

"Well," answered the Major, "I don't want to hurt him. As he views the matter, the lives of his people depend upon his vigilance; but I don't think he'll attack us unless convinced we intend to betray the secret of the Indian stronghold."

CHAPTER XXIV.

DON CARLOS OUT FOR A RAID.

WHEN one gets on the trail of a love affair, he doesn't like to leave it until he has seen the end of it. That is the only excuse that can be offered for following the Major and Miss Hortensia so persistently, to the exclusion of all the other members of our Cuban family from the last few chapters of our story.

But now, having first seen them safely ensconced in the midst of the mountains, and at last on the way out of them, we may surely leave them awhile to their fate. Whatever that may prove to be, at least it was of their own seeking, and they will have nobody to blame but themselves, if it turns out adversely; but we shall meet them later.

We left Don Carlos and Master Archie Goodwin, of whose fortunes we have had a fleeting glimpse, on the summit of Yunque Mountain, where they were to await orders from General Maceo, then on his long march from the east end of Cuba to its extreme western province.

The days and the weeks passed away, and still no direct tidings came from the insurgent general.

Tired of inaction, at last Don Carlos proclaimed his intention of descending from his stronghold and doing something on his own account. He had thoroughly drilled his little force, had equipped his men with new weapons received from another filibuster vessel, and felt equal to almost any emergency.

"They will forget all about me down below, on the sugar plantations and along the coast, if I stay here idle, while my brethren are making names for themselves in the field, all over the island. What do you say, my boy, to going with me part way, and from a safe place watching me singe the whiskers of the haughty Don? Faith, his beard must be well grown by this time, and it will be fun to see it burn."

"I'd like to go," replied Archie, "if you will let me take part in the fight. Chiquito is well used to the noise of battle now, and I'm sure he wouldn't bolt with me."

"No, no," rejoined Don Carlos; "if I let you go part way, you must look upon it as a great favour. I'm responsible, you know, to your father for your safety, and you must keep out of the thick of the fight. Promise me, now, that you will obey my orders, or else you stay at the Yunque, and don't get even a smell of powder-smoke."

"Well, I promise; but I think it's mean of you, Don Carlos, to keep me here like a prisoner, without

even a taste of a skirmish. I shall tell my father how you have treated me, if I ever see him again."

"Tut, tut, my son; none of that. And you can't badger me into letting you expose that pretty face to a machete cut, either. I'm too old a bird to be driven by threats or caught by flattery."

Archie submitted with as good grace as possible, on the assumption that "half a loaf was better than no bread," and early the next morning he might have been seen by the side of Don Carlos, wending his way down the trail to the valley below. There were two hundred men in the troop, all well armed, well mounted, and with the determination to fight to the death written in their faces.

A hundred others Don Carlos had left to guard the Yunque while he and these picked troops were away on the raid. It might last a week, — it might last a month or all summer; nobody knew, not even the captain in command. Maceo had trusted much to his own discretion, only cautioning him not to abandon the mountain unless he saw a direct benefit to result from such a move. Although Don Carlos did not mention his purpose, even to Archie, yet it was his intention, if he saw a clear field before him, to turn his back on Yunque for good and all, and seek to make a junction with the command of Maceo or some other that would bring him into direct contact with the enemy.

About mid-afternoon of the second day they had

crossed the forest valleys at the foot of Yunque, and climbed a ridge that hid a fertile plain from sight. On the farther side of this ridge they descended towards a plain, which, as they could see by occasional glimpses through the trees, was dotted with extensive *ingenios*, or sugar plantations.

Half way down the ridge, Don Carlos motioned Archie aside, and, giving an order to his lieutenant, took a side trail to a lateral spur of hill, while the troop filed past. Riding down this spur, they soon came upon an abandoned coffee estate, the buildings of which had been destroyed by fire. Some massive walls were still standing, amongst which grew coffee and wild trees, and at an angle of the walls the Cuban halted. "Here, my son," he said; "from the lower end of this plateau you can see the *ingenio* which I am going to raid. I shall return to-night or to-morrow morning early, and, meanwhile, you are to remain here. This young man will stay by you, and he has a donkey, as you see, laden with provisions. So, adieu! God be with thee till my return."

He held out his hand, — which Archie took reluctantly, for he was very much vexed, — and then put spurs to his horse and rode back on the trail after his troop. The young man to whom Don Carlos had alluded was none other than Archie's quondam foe, Felipe, whom he had thrashed at the beginning of their acquaintance. Neither of them was very glad to be left alone with no other company, but they

made the best of the situation. Felipe removed saddle and bridle from Chiquito, and tethered him out for a feed off the grass; then he performed the same service for the donkey, while Archie sought the post of observation indicated by his friend.

An hour or more passed by, then he saw the troop straggling out into the cane field below. At the same moment a puff of smoke shot out from a corner of the woods on the verge of the field, and a horse fell forward, digging his nose into the ground, and throwing his rider over his head. Then the troopers deployed right and left and dashed into the dense thickets of canes, and Archie saw machetes flash, and heard the faint reports of revolvers. Later he saw the fleeing forms of several Spanish soldiers making for the protection of the adobe wall that ran around the planter's house and the sugar-works. The troopers dashed after them, but the pursued gained it in safety, and as they disappeared a sheet of smoke puffed out from numerous loopholes; several saddles were emptied, and riderless horses were rearing in terror.

The blast of a bugle reached the boy on the plateau, and he saw the troop divide again and sweep around the wall, seeking an entrance. They evidently found a breach, for he saw nothing more of them for a long time; then, with a sudden outburst of smoke, he heard the rattle of revolvers and musketry. The *ingenio* had been fired; its thatched

roof sent volumes of smoke up into the sky. Then there was a brief space of silence, terminated by a tremendous explosion. The dwelling and out-buildings had been blown up with dynamite.

The cane fields were again alive with fugitives, who were mercilessly shot and sabred by their pursuers. Many of them made for the woods, but very few succeeded in reaching their shelter. Archie could note the swing of the lasso here and there, and when the bugler sounded the recall, some of the horsemen returned, dragging their prisoners behind them. Another body was seen to go down the dusty road, after having been disarmed, urged forward by the blows of machete and sabre.

These were the last tokens of life about the hacienda, ere darkness fell around it. Except for the drifting columns of smoke, and the lurid bursts of flame, and the roofless walls of the buildings, the now peaceful plain gave no hint of having been the scene of recent slaughter. The boy had followed every movement with breathless interest, so wholly absorbed in the scene that he was hardly conscious of his surroundings. But as darkness intervened its veil between him and the plain, he became aware that he and the *mozó*, Felipe, were to pass the night alone upon the plateau. So he returned to the ruined dwelling, where, beneath a mango-tree, he found Felipe awaiting with a supper spread. As he was completely absorbed in the recollection of what

he had seen, and his servant was uncommunicative, he soon rolled himself in his blanket and tried to sleep. But again and again the terrible scene of blood and carnage came before his eyes, and sleep he could not. So, after a while, along about midnight, he arose and strolled down the steep bank of one of the ravines, carrying his revolver with him, as a matter of course.

It was dark and gloomy, with only here and there a flicker of moonlight. Choosing a seat within a dusky shadow, he leaned against a tree and abandoned himself to reverie. It might have been half an hour later that a sound as of the breaking of twigs attracted his attention. Awaking from his half-dream, and listening intently, he became convinced that somebody was climbing the bank of the ravine. It would have been quite imprudent for him to have made any motion then, so he crouched in the shadow and waited. The noises came nearer and nearer, until the something that was making them had reached the very tree, from the opposite side, against which he was leaning.

There it halted, and, peering around cautiously, Archie saw that it was a man, probably an escaped soldier from the hacienda, for he carried a rifle, which he placed carefully against the tree, and then drew off his cap and mopped his brow. It must have been Archie's good fortune, nothing else, that ordained the musket should have been set up there

within his reach. At any rate, he looked upon it as a providential circumstance not to be ignored, and, reaching around the tree, grasped the gun by the barrel and drew it to him. And when the soldier started in surprise, attracted by the slight noise, he met the muzzle of the rifle staring him straight in the face. It may have been an old friend of his, but he did not seem to recognise it in this new rôle.

"*Diablo!*" was all he said, and stood in his tracks like one transfixed.

"You surrender?" demanded the boy in Spanish.

"*Pues, señor*, why not? What else can I do?"

"Nothing much, I guess," said Archie, coolly; "so march before me up the hill." He turned and went before his captor, with all docility stumbling up the incline, and when the level was reached walked to the spot where Felipe was sleeping.

"Get up, Felipe, here is a prisoner," said Archie, stirring the boy with his foot. He turned out with bad grace, muttering curses on the Americans and Spaniards who had come to Cuba to ruin the island of his ancestors. But he procured a rope and assisted to tie the man to a tree. "Leave him to me," he growled, "I'll watch him while you sleep. I won't let him get away. Oh, no, he sha'n't escape from me!"

There seemed something sinister in these words of the half-breed, but Archie was now tired as well

as sleepy, and so he rolled his blanket around himself once more and attempted to slumber. He had hardly closed his eyes when he was aroused by a cry from the prisoner: "Help, help, señor, — he is going to kill me!"

Snatching at his revolver, Archie darted towards the tree to which the prisoner was fastened, but before he reached it was confronted by the *moso*. He had a long knife in one hand, and his eyes gleamed most dangerously as he brandished it at the boy.

"Go back!" he cried. "This man belongs to me! Don't you know Don Carlos takes no prisoners?"

"Leave that to me," said Archie, handling his revolver menacingly. "He is my prisoner, not yours. Go lie down, and let him alone."

But Felipe still brandished his long knife, and still advanced against the helpless Spaniard, keeping one eye on each of his adversaries.

"Look here, Felipe, stop this foolishness and throw away that knife!" Archie could hardly believe that the half-breed would dare to brave his authority, knowing that he was an intimate friend of the Chief, and that he could have him severely punished for insubordination. But the *moso* merely snarled and showed his teeth menacingly, like an angry dog. Instead of persisting in his attack upon the prisoner, however, he turned upon Archie with a

knife-thrust, and slashed his sleeve, coming near to penetrating his side. Then the boy saw that this was no time for parley and levelled his revolver; but he still hesitated to shoot, hoping to cow the young villain without resorting to bloodshed. Noting this hesitancy the *mozo* darted at him and lowered his head like an angry bull, with the keen-bladed knife pointed directly at his heart.

"Shoot, oh, shoot!" cried the prisoner. "*Dios!* If I could only burst these bonds!"

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SPANISH PRISONER.

ARCHIE dodged the threatened thrust, stepped quickly to one side, and, as the maddened boy went past, dealt him a blow with the revolver-butt that felled him to the earth. The knife was buried hilt-deep in the ground, and, though unconscious, the would-be murderer kept his grasp on it, so determined was his deadly purpose.

"Oh, señor, set me free, and I will help you," cried the Spaniard.

Archie glanced at him, in an instant weighed the chances, and with Felipe's knife, which he wrenched from his hand, cut the ropes that bound the prisoner to the tree. It was better, he thought, to take the risk of his escape, rather than be left to cope alone with his determined enemy.

Together, they wound Felipe about with new ropes, and then fastened him to the same tree against which the Spaniard had been tied. They had hardly accomplished this when the young savage came to consciousness. Seeing that the tables had been turned, and he now was the only prisoner, he raved like a mad man. He taunted Archie with

turning against the patriot cause and being in league with the enemy. He threatened to bring an accusation against him, when Don Carlos should return, that would cause him to be stood up and shot. But Archie only shrugged his shoulders, and this exasperated Felipe to the verge of madness.

"Oh, ho," he cried, "so you think your friend can save you from the tribunal? Well, wait and see! Do you know who it was brought your Yankee Major to the court-martial? I did it! I was the one who carried the letter to Colonel Gomez. I set Don Celestino on the trail after him with his hounds. If I had only gone with him, instead of turning back for the Yunque, there might now be a different corpse in the lonely grave in the forest. Don Celestino shot my sister, Juanita, when she was in the guise of a boy; I wish he had killed her! The fool, to guide the Gringo into the mountains, and to cling to that false mistress, sister of Gomez's wife. But wait; I know the trail to the Indian camp; I will have the lives of all of them! I know: you think Felipe the half-breed — the despised *mozo* — has no friends, no influence; but he will yet gloat over your dead carcass, and see the buzzards feeding on your flesh! Twice, now, you have defeated me. Your blood shall flow to pay for this. I will have your life, your blood, blood, blood!"

Thus he raved, and Archie listened, astonished, yet silent. The information as to the fate of his

friends was news to him, for he had not been made cognizant of their doings since they left the Yunque. But he gathered that they were now safe, at all events ; and he would not gratify the savage by asking questions as to their present hiding-place. The Major, Hortensia, Juanita, — all were alive, and at present in safety somewhere. For obtaining further information he would rely upon the resources of his friend, Don Carlos.

Meanwhile, he had not been oblivious to his increased responsibilities in the freedom he had given the Spaniard. He had taken care that all the arms were within his reach, and that the former prisoner should not approach very near to them or to him. The *moso*, after an interval of silence, taunted him with his defenceless position, in case the Spaniard should choose to attack ; and in fact, he urged the latter to do that very thing. " You had better," he said, addressing the foreigner, " for if you don't kill this boy now, Don Carlos will shoot you when he comes. He never spares a prisoner ; he kills all."

But the Spaniard, after a glance into the frank, open countenance of his captor, shook his head. He went voluntarily and sat down apart from Archie and his arms, and said, at last : " No, I have surrendered, and have given my word not to attempt to escape. Besides, where should I go ? I hear the insurgent troop approaching even now, and to flee would be but to run another risk of being shot."

There was not the least suspicion about him of enmity or revenge, and, won by his honesty and frankness, Archie assured him that he would interpose between him and the Chief, — that he would see to it his life should be safe.

“I will trust you,” said the Spaniard, simply; “my sympathies are with the Cubans, in truth, and it was not from my own choice that I was brought here to fight them. I am a native of Cadiz, in old Spain, and I was drafted from my mother’s farm and forced to serve in the army. Along with four or five thousand other young men about my age, none of them over twenty-two years old, I was sent in a troop-ship to Havana, and then, without delay, driven into the field against the insurgents.”

“A pretty story,” sneered Felipe; “but wait — wait till Don Carlos gets here. He’s heard too many of that sort; they all tell it. Just wait!”

The tramp of hoofs was becoming louder and approaching nearer, and at the same time daylight was creeping through the forest. Simultaneously with the breaking of dawn, a horseman was espied riding towards the anxious group beneath the mango tree. It was Don Carlos himself, his head bound about with a bloody handkerchief, his left arm in a sling. But he sat his saddle steadily, and when he came within hail saluted gaily.

“How now, my son? What is this? A prisoner?

Who — why, it is Felipe! What — and a Spanish soldier guarding him! Come, come, explain."

Archie told him of the night's events in as few words as possible, and Don Carlos looked in amazement from one to the other.

During this report the *mozo* had been silent, well knowing that it would be of no use to speak before he was asked; but when his turn came he gave the lie to all that the youth had said. "He has turned traitor, master — this Gringo pup — he is spying out the country for the Spaniards. Ask him who his friends are at Baracoa! He can't deny that they are all, every one of them, Spanish officers."

"Well," said the Chief, after looking at the culprit long and steadily, "I knew all that before, but it will take much more than your unsupported word to prove my friend a traitor." "Here men," he said to two soldiers who had followed him, "take this fellow and cut him loose." The *mozo* broke out into thanks, thinking he was to be given his freedom and at last have his revenge. "Yes, cut him loose, but bind him again more securely, and lead him with a lariat to the camp. This time he goes into the mines. The only safe place for such a villain is under ground, and under ground he goes." Then Don Carlos turned to the Spaniard and frowned from under his bloody bandage, regarding him with anything but favour.

"Here's another man for the mines," he said ;
"take him along with the rest of the prisoners."

The soldiers were about seizing the poor conscript when Archie interposed with, "Don Carlos, this man has my word that he shall not be harshly treated. He has kept faith with me ; I must keep it with him. It was not his fault, poor fellow, that he ran into my arms. He was not taken fighting, but escaping. Now, it seems to me the best way out of the matter is to set him free again."

The Chief glanced at the boy wickedly. "Yes, and have him up again in front of me with a new equipment inside of a week."

"If the Captain will allow me, I would say a word," said the prisoner.

"Well, speak up ; what is it ?"

"The Captain well knows that my pay in the ranks was small, and that the chances for me to ever return to Spain are very poor. I have not fought against him because it was my will, but because I was compelled. Now, if I could send back to my mother, in Spain, the sum of two hundred *pesetas* (forty dollars) each year, which would keep her from want, I would not care to go back at all ; and, my Captain, it would be my desire to fight for the freedom of Cuba."

The Chief looked him over with a searching glance. "So be it ; your mother shall have the money. Give him back his gun ! Go ! Get into

the ranks. You shall have the next horse whose saddle is emptied."

The conscript seized his hand and kissed it, then did the same by Archie's, and without a word shouldered his restored rifle, and fell in behind the main body of the troop as it filed past.

The Chief looked after him rather contemptuously. "In that soldier," he said, turning to Archie, "you see the bulk of the Spanish army, composed of young men and youths, dragged from their homes to fight in a cause of which they know absolutely nothing. It isn't his fault, as you said; but we have to treat them with severity, now and then, or we should never prevail. Am I hurt, did you ask? Well, yes, a stray bullet glanced from my temple. But the ball is not moulded yet for Carlos Lopez. As you know, they have had me killed a dozen times, — in the newspapers."

"Why do we take so few prisoners? Only for one reason: because we cannot subsist them. It is better to kill all we can in battle, and drive the rest back upon the enemy for him to subsist. To be sure, they will come up against us again; but the second time they are so demoralised, having been once defeated, that they soon cast away their arms and run; and a panic once started soon seizes the rest; so the returning of the prisoners to their own armies is not only a matter of policy but of economy."

"You speak," said Archie, "as if victory always perched upon the Cuban standards. Does it, really, and do the Spaniards never win?"

"Why, of course, my boy; we are not always victorious. But you see, we take good care not to attack unless we have every advantage on our side. Sometimes we are overwhelmed by superior numbers, but even then there is a difference: we are battling for freedom, knowing well that if defeated there is no hope for years to come. But the rank and file of the enemy are only fighting because they must, blindly and without reason. They have no great incentive. Like the Hessian cattle that George the Third bought and sent over to battle against your revolutionary ancestors, they are stupid and ignorant; and not only that, but they are wretchedly poor and dependent.

"Yes, we must eventually win, for we are fighting for a principle as old as eternity, — as broad as the world. And the Spaniards? What are they here for? Merely for gain, — for the upholding of the tottering throne of a baby king not yet out of the nursery. Pah! Once the Spaniard could boast of a throne and a monarch commanding world-wide attention. Now their throne is the nursery, and their king a mewling, spluttering infant in arms. Like his soldiers in the field, he himself does not know what his men are fighting for. It is a case of ignorance on the one hand and imbecility on the other.

But, thank God, the cruelties of Spain are to be avenged ; upon her own head are to be visited the sins of her soldiers. She is at her last gasp ; the most poverty-stricken nation in Europe, except Italy : the proudest, and at the same time the poorest ; the weakest, and the most vainglorious. She is all veneer and varnish ; she has no heart ; and the day is at hand when her miserable condition will be shown to all."

Don Carlos had dismounted, and was refreshing himself with a cup of coffee, under the mango tree, while his horse browsed amongst the ruins. He had sent orders for his troop to encamp in the forest above, and to remain for rest and refreshment during the day. What his plans were for the immediate future, he did not, of course, divulge ; but it was easily to be seen that now, having had a taste of blood, the tiger in his nature would not allow him to rest inactive.

He and Archie spent the greater part of the day on the plateau, swinging in their hammocks beneath the trees. About mid-afternoon an aide came down with a despatch from the officer left in command, upon reading which Don Carlos was up and alert in an instant. His horse was brought in, and into the saddle he vaulted, dashing off into the forest, shouting for Archie to follow him.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE INSURGENT'S ROMANCE.

WHEN Archie reached the command he found the men breaking camp and the horses already saddled for a march. Very soon the column was in motion and retracing its way down the hills towards the plain it had left but a few hours before. All the prisoners and the useless impediments had been sent under escort to the Yunque, and those now in line were the picked men of the company.

Don Carlos motioned the youth to his side, and they rode together down the trail. "I am sorry to have disturbed your siesta," said the Chief; "but I have received news of a most urgent character, that necessitates our presence over in the adjoining province. The plantation of a dear friend of mine is threatened by the Spaniards, and I can only reach it by a forced march of nearly two days. Can you keep up, think you? Is your courage good?"

"Yes indeed," answered Archie. "I am longing for a real adventure, as you know, and perhaps now I can have my desires gratified."

"Perhaps," rejoined Don Carlos, with a tender gleam in his eyes. "I am afraid that this time you

will witness a fight at closer quarters than the last. But it is my duty, as I see it. May God keep us!"

Archie was too considerate to ask the object or destination of the troop; but that night, as a brief halt was made, his friend divulged both. The way had become so rough that the guides advised a halt, not so much for rest as for safety; the trail being between two deep ravines, and a misstep being fraught with danger to men and horses. Neither of the two companions could sleep, and, apart from the others, wrapped in their *sarapes*, they passed the time till the approach of dawn in conversation. Don Carlos had become strangely thoughtful and pensive; he displayed to the boy a phase of his many-sided character that hitherto he had carefully guarded.

"I have a premonition of disaster or death," he said, "which I cannot shake off. It is foolish; yes, worse than foolish, to mention this to you; but I must unburden myself of a portion of my load of trouble. There is no one else to whom I can confide my grief, and why should I not speak of it? Perhaps it will assist me to see it in a different light, and relieve my heart a trifle. Yes, it is about a woman; all man's troubles come of women. You have seen me alone, holding converse with none of the other sex; and it has been because of one whom I met not long ago, — one who captured my heart, and almost made a misanthrope of me.

"It was a little over a year ago, in Havana, when

the carnival was at its height, and our capital city was filled to overflowing with arrivals from other cities and from the interior. On the occasion of the great ball in the vast halls of the Casino Español, there was an assemblage that crowded the great building to suffocation. Not only the belles of Havana were there, but their beautiful sisters from the haciendas — from those baronial estates where, for generations, they and their ancestors had been bred in wealth and waited on by luxury. It was an hour, indeed, when woman reigned supreme; when man was permitted only as her escort, or attendant upon her wishes.

“The rebellion then had not assumed the proportions it has now, and many, such as myself, who sympathised with the cause of Cuba, were still unsuspected, and had the freedom of the city. The ball at the Casino was a masked one: that is, the ladies wore dominos, though this privilege was not extended to the men.

“For reasons which you can appreciate, I chose to impersonate a Spanish officer of the ‘King’s own’ regiment, my personality not then being known in Havana. As I had passed several years in Spain, the deception was not detected; and it so happened that my first partner in the dance took me for what I claimed to be, and not for what I really was. She was my first partner, and my last; for after her none other could satisfy my fastidious sense, she

was so altogether peerless. Tall, with a form of matchless symmetry, robed in white, her only ornaments a strand of pearls around her throat and a double row banding the dark hair above her brow, she seemed to me a creation far removed from ordinary mortals. You cold Americans cannot understand, of course; but I had lost my heart to this beautiful woman before we had been together half an hour. I knew she was beautiful, although the hideous domino hid her face, all but the eyes and brow. And when, after the dancing was over, and the company had begun to unmask, she at my solicitation, removed it, I found my anticipations more than realised.

“From the moment that the white fingers had removed the domino, and she turned upon me her glorious great eyes, I was her slave, and have been ever since. Her beauty made me gasp, and for an instant I felt that I could have fallen prostrate at her feet. My admiration was evident enough, but she entirely ignored it, — swept me over with a glance that was neither disdainful nor haughty but suggested an unapproachable remoteness, and then fell back against the cushions of the divan to which I had led her after the dancing was done. Taking up a great fan of white ostrich plumes, she swept it gracefully before her face, slowly, and with rhythmic motion.

“Recovering my self-possession, I said, ‘Señorita,

you have all the Spanish grace and mastery of the fan. Did you acquire it in the mother country ?'

" 'I was educated in Seville,' she answered, simply ; 'but Spain is no mother country of mine ; I am a *Cubana*.'

" 'Well, call her stepmother, then ; you will admit that relationship.'

" 'I admit nothing,' she slowly replied. 'But, of a truth, she has ever been toward us more like the traditional stepmother than like one bound to us by ties of flesh and blood.'

" 'She took me for a veritable Spaniard, and I was bound to maintain the character I had assumed, so I said : 'But at least you will grant that Cuba has been greatly indebted to Spain ; that she owes to her much that she can never repay. You do not forget that Spanish sailors discovered this island, Spanish hidalgos settled it, and Spanish soldiers fought for it during long centuries.'

" 'Oh, as to that,' she rejoined, with a scornful gesture, 'if Spain had not discovered Cuba, then some other country would have done so. It was not essential to the well-being of the world that it should have been discovered by Spain ; indeed, if history tells us truly, it would have been better deferred.'

" 'I agreed with her fully, but I repeated, incredulously, 'Better deferred ?'

" 'Yes, I mean it, for thereby some other nation

more humane, such as the French or the English, would have found and occupied it.'

"She had dropped her fan and had risen from her recumbent position, and into her cheeks had come a flush of carmine. Only a moment previously I had compared her to a marble statue, so cold and calm she was ; but now this statue was alive, even combative.

"'Yes,' she continued, flashing at me an indignant glance, 'Spain was recreant to her high trust ; she not only neglected the great opportunity given her of God, to save the souls of the heathen millions, but she sent them rather into perdition. We all know, for Spain's own priests and bishops have left it on record, that their country plundered and murdered the innocent, inoffensive people of this island ; and, within the century that it was discovered, she had nearly exterminated them all, to the number of hundreds of thousands. You know this ; you cannot deny it, yet you speak of her as of one who has conferred inestimable blessings !'

"'I do not deny this,' I rejoined. 'But think of the times in which it was done. The whole world was cruel then. Our Crown had been to great expense, men had risked their lives and fortunes on those expeditions, and they plundered the natives for reimbursement.'

"'No,' she said, with a decisive shake of her head, 'no, you cannot plead the age in which they lived in

extenuation. That, also, has been urged in defence of the atrocities of Philip the Second of Spain, of the Inquisition, and scores of other Spanish infamies. But reflect, our blessed Saviour had preached the gospel of gentleness more than a thousand years before that age was born. No, it is innate in Spanish character, which is cruel, even rapacious, proud and arrogant.'

"‘That is a serious arraignment of my country and countrymen,’ I said coldly, but knowing well it was true and deserved.

"‘But it is a just one,’ she rejoined. ‘Oh, that this were all we of Cuba had to bring against the so-called mother country! But no, we cannot forget—it would be impossible—that our brothers, even our sisters, have been murdered by her; that our properties have been devastated; and that not long ago in the centuries past, but in modern times, within a very few years.’

"‘But surely,’ I said, ‘you would not deny to Spain the right to punish rebellious subjects, to collect taxes, to put down insurrection?’

"‘Assuredly I would, for by what right does Spain now hold us in subjection? By what right does she impose upon us taxes that crush us to the earth, while she flourishes and fattens upon our very blood? Should not three hundred years of possession suffice her? Has she not wrung from this bleeding, suffering isle and people more than sufficient to requite her for all they have cost her?’

"She had risen now, and stood over me like an offended goddess, her glorious form erect, her eyes blazing at the remembrance of her country's wrongs.

"I rose, and bowed. 'You may be right, Señorita; in which case I am grossly misled, since I am in the service of that tyrannical power you so strongly, and I must admit justly, condemn. But for my own sake I could wish that all difficulties might be settled. Do you indeed believe the barrier between us an insuperable one? Is there no way by which I could win your favour?'

"She swept me over with a glance, and answered, 'No, as between you and me there may be nothing but an armed neutrality. My opinions on this subject will never change; your duty to your king and country is the barrier that shall ever separate us.'

"'But may I not call on you, while you are in town, at least?'

"'I do not think it well; but here comes my father; you may prefer your request to him. Father, this is Captain Lopez, of the Battalion Alfonso XII. He requests your permission to call on us. Captain Lopez, my father, General Del Monte.'

"The General was an elderly man, with white hair and beard, erect carriage and piercing eyes. He scanned my features keenly, then seemed about to proffer his hand, but withdrew it.

"'Do my eyes deceive me?' he exclaimed. 'Cap-

tain Lopez turned traitor! When I last saw him he was an ardent patriot, a friend and defender of Cuba. Now I find him on the side of the enemy?’

“He had good reason to remember me, for we had met only a few months previously, to consult with the political chiefs of Puerto Principe about the defence of their province in the event of an uprising.

“‘No, General,’ I answered, ‘not turned traitor, but merely masquerading. Your daughter assumed that I was a Spanish officer because I am in the garb of one. I trust she will pardon me the deception, and that you will understand why it was I played that part.’

“The old General extended his hand at once; but his daughter was not so ready to overlook the affront. However, she soon expressed herself as glad that I was a Cuban, and on the side of Cuba, and we became very good friends before we separated. I had her father’s permission to call on them, and I improved it to the extent of the time at my disposal. Then my duties called me to this part of the island, the war broke out shortly after, and — I have not seen my queen since that eventful week.’”

Don Carlos paused, and Archie interposed: “But shall you never see her again? Is it far to her home? Why do you not seek her out?”

“My boy, it is two days’ march to her home. We are on the road there now; I have information that

her father's *ingenio* is about to be attacked. He is away with Maceo, and she is there alone, defenceless. This is the purport of the message I received yesterday, and caused our hasty departure. It is a ride for her rescue ; and, after all, I may be too late. God grant we may reach her home in time ! ”

CHAPTER XXVII.

BRAVE PATRIOTS TO THE RESCUE.

MORE than a year has passed since the events related by Captain Lopez, — since he first met, at the ball in the Casino Español, the beautiful Cuban, Emilia Del Monte. The conflict was now waging which at that time impended ; for ten months past the island had been the scene of many an encounter, and already the interior was one vast battle-field.

The Spaniards were confined mainly to the coast and its cities, while the country parts were in the hands of the insurgents. The torch had been applied to many a plantation, and the smoking ruins of dwellings and villages attested the wide-spread devastation. The great hacienda Del Monte, in the province of Puerto Principe, had thus far been exempt from ravage, because it was the property of so well known a friend of Cuban independence ; but of late it was rumored that the Spaniards themselves were to move against it and destroy what the patriots had left intact.

General Del Monte had been for months in the field, actively assisting the cause of *Cuba libre* ; but

when word reached him that his own estate was to be an object of attack, he took a handful of his most faithful followers and hastened to its defence. For alone in the great stone mansion was his daughter Emilia, with hardly a servant remaining to attend her, and without any companions whatever. All the able-bodied men had gone to the wars, leaving only the women behind, and most of these had fled to the towns and cities. The plantation was nearly deserted, with broad fields of cane uncut, its mills all idle, and an air of desolation over all.

Emilia had been urged to retire to Puerto Principe or to Havana, but had refused to leave the estate while her father was in the field. He should have one place to retreat upon, in event of disaster or of wounds; and more than this: she made it the rallying-spot for recruits to the insurgent ranks, where horses were furnished them, provisions gathered for troops in need, and a hospital improvised in the abandoned mill-house. She became known as the fair angel of the Cuban cause in Puerto Principe, and her name was never mentioned by the patriot without a blessing being coupled with it.

It was late one afternoon in June, at the beginning of the rainy season, that her father arrived from the front. Emilia was standing in the western doorway, looking out over the sea of brown and rustling canes, which extended away towards the surrounding hills as far as the eye could reach.

She saw a little group of horsemen approaching, at their head a familiar figure, — familiar, yet with an unwonted droop of the shoulders, usually so erect, and the head swaying from side to side. Her heart gave a great leap as she hastened down the path between clumps of bamboos, and finally into the cane-field, meeting her father in the road. He was mounted upon a strange horse, and she was close upon him before he drew rein and recognised his daughter. His eyes were dull and leaden ; there was a dark blood-stain on the breast of his coat ; one arm hung limp at his side. She was about to clasp his legs and grasp his hand, when one of the men spurred forward and signed for her to desist. “ For the love of God, señorita, let us get him into the house at once. We have had a hot skirmish with the enemy ; they are not far from us now, and they are a hundred to our one at least. We must barricade doors and windows, and defend the dwelling as best we may.”

Repressing the inclination to take her father in her arms, Emilia stood silently aside, hands clenched, her face set and rigid, while the troopers hurried towards the house.

Though dazed by this sudden blow, Emilia hastened after them, summoned the few faithful servants, gave orders for the barricading of the dwelling, sent the troopers' horses to the rear of the great wall, and then, as the last door and window was securely

fastened, she sought her father. He was stretched upon a couch, unconscious, but soon opened his eyes as she bathed his head and bound up the wounded arm. Drawing her head to his breast, he imprinted a kiss upon her white forehead, and whispered : "Sweetheart, no tears ; this is our last stand. Hasten to send for help from Captain Lopez ; he is in the valley of the Cauto, in the next province, two days' distance. By hard riding he can get here in time to rescue you ; for the Spaniards will be diverted by the plunder they will find south of us. Go, darling ; kiss me, then send one of the servants to the patriot camp."

He lapsed again into unconsciousness, and Emilia, with a heavy heart, left him to give the order that might result in their deliverance.

Three days passed, and the fourth was half gone, when distant firing proclaimed the approach of the attacking party. They could be seen advancing through the canes ; soon their bullets spluttered and splashed against the hacienda walls. The leader of the insurgent band came to Emilia for instructions. He was a young man, lithe and erect, with cheek tanned by exposure in the field for many months. Since the first barricading, he had been busy with his little company in strengthening the walls and erecting an outwork of fallen trees to impede the advance of the Spaniards. Slowly, as the enemy came on his men had fallen back, until now

they were within the stone-walled dwelling, disposed at such of the loopholes as their scanty numbers could command, and replying briskly to the Spanish fire.

"Pardon me, señorita," the young chief said, "but it will be impossible to hold until the morning, unless we shall receive assistance, which I do not expect. Will you not try to escape now, while it is possible? You cannot be of assistance to the General; he is nearly gone. As to us, we know what our fate will be if captured. If you will consent to escape through the wood at the back of the garden, then we may be able to cut our way past the Spanish soldiers and follow you, after your safety has been assured."

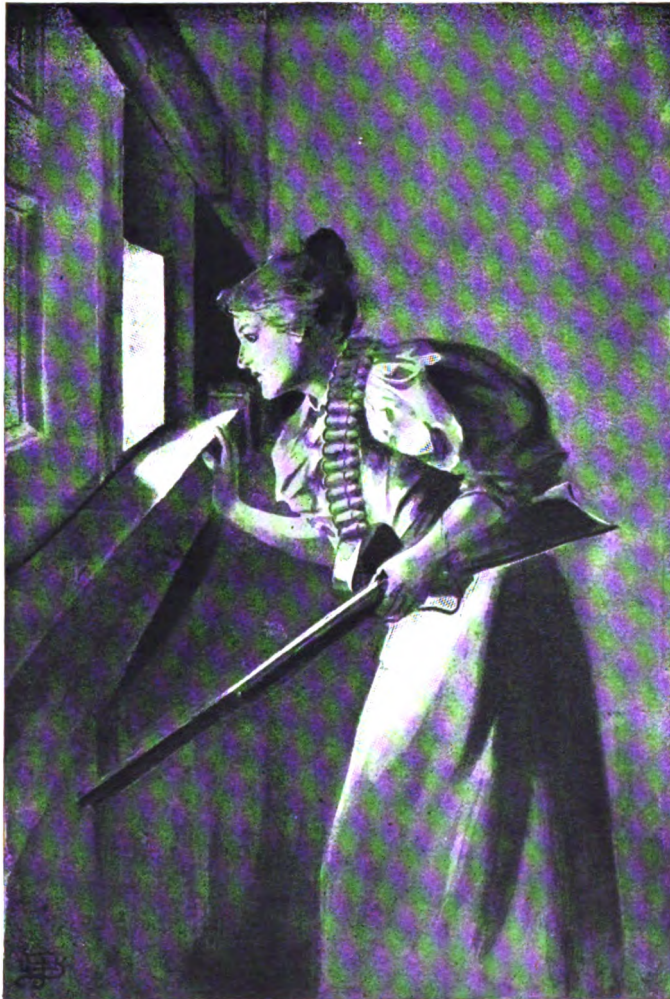
"And leave my father?" Emilia's cheek paled at the thought; but her eyes were undimmed by tears. She ran into the room where her father lay, his blanched face against the pillows, the unmistakable stamp of death even then on his brow. She faltered and hid her face within her hands.

"You see," said the insurgent, gently, "it will soon be over with our beloved General, — in an hour at the most. We cannot save him by remaining. Will you not attempt to escape?"

Emilia hesitated a moment, then she had made her resolve: it was to stay by her father until the last. Even if death deprived her of him, even then she would not leave his remains to be desecrated by those inhuman monsters howling at the door, who

spared neither the cradle, nor old age, nor helpless womanhood. She shook her head, and the officer, after casting at her and his dying Chief a glance of pity, retired to assist his men at their posts.

In the corner of the room stood a rifle, loaded, with a belt of cartridges hanging near. Seizing them, Emilia hastened to the point where the battle seemed to wage the fiercest. It was at the end of the great hall, where the massive door, bolted, barred with oaken beams, threatened to give way to the battering blows now rained upon it. Darkness was now settling over the land, but peering through the loophole beside the door, the watcher within saw clearly the assembled soldiers of the Spanish battalion, brought into strong relief against the blazing cane-fields, which they had set on fire. Thrusting her rifle through the loop-hole, the girl pressed the trigger, and one of the Spaniards threw up his hands and fell to the ground. Another followed him, and yet another, before the alarmed and astonished men could get out of range. Exposed as they were, their every motion betrayed by the flames behind them, they seemed about to give up the attack, or to postpone it till daylight, when they could fight to better advantage. But, fired by the example of their leader, who, sword in hand, called upon them to renew the attack, they threw themselves once more against the door. It yielded, tottered on its hinges; but just as the foremost



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soldier leaped into the opening, Emilia pressed her rifle against his side and fired. The Spaniard fell forward, dead ; another took his place, only to receive a bullet from the weapon in the girl's steady hands.

At last there appeared the form of the commanding officer himself, struggling over the bodies of his men. The rifle cracked again, the sword fell rattling from his hand as he stumbled across the threshold, prostrate at the feet of the fair defender of the dwelling. He was only wounded, the ball having passed through his shoulder ; but he strove in vain to rise, for his enraged soldiers were now pouring after him, surging like a sea over his prostrate form, and past the solitary defender, who stood helpless to stem the flood. He tried to cry out, to regain his feet, but too late. They swept over him and beyond him, bearing before them and across the hall, even into the room where lay her dying father, the woman who had withstood them alone and unassisted.

She was helpless ; she was surrounded by enraged and gloating enemies ; she saw, as in a vision, her father in the grasp of death : but Emilia Del Monte neither cried out for help, nor asked for quarter. Wounded, crushed into unconsciousness, she was at last flung by the flood of demons into a corner of the room, and across the very couch on which her dying parent lay gasping his last breath.

But at this very moment, even as the press of sol-

diers dashed itself against the wall and rebounded with the shock, there arose a cry without ! It was the insurgent yell, "*Al machete ! al machete !*—to the sword, put them all to the sword. On, on, for *Cuba libre*, for our land and our liberty !"

It penetrated into the rooms where the Spanish soldiers were crowded together, huddled like sheep in a fold, and snarling like wolves in a trap. They knew then their time had come ; they struggled to get out, to escape from the threatened danger, but in vain. Riding desperately through the blazing cane, spreading out right and left, so as to surround the Spaniards and allow none to escape, the gallant troop led by Don Carlos had enclosed the enemy within a wall of fire and steel. They cut and slashed ; they discharged their carbines at the cowering foe ; they slaughtered without cessation ; and then, the enemy without having been quieted, they leaped from their steaming horses and charged the dwelling.

At their head strode Don Carlos, his gleaming machete hewing a path for his comrades to follow in. He was unconscious of danger ; his eyes seemed to see nothing, his ears to hear nothing ; but in his heart he carried a great fear, that he might be too late for the rescue of her who was more than all else in the world to him. This fear was finally forced into a conviction, as he penetrated farther and farther into the rooms packed with savage sol-

diers, and finally saw, beyond the mass of struggling men, a white-robed figure lying lifeless across a couch. The sea of soldiers, tossed and beat about and rudely thrust against it, threatened to submerge it. Noting its peril, Don Carlos made directly for it, parting the writhing bodies right and left, carving with his machete a bleeding lane through that dense mass.

When almost there, a Spanish soldier turned and held a pistol at his face. But ere he could pull trigger, he fell, quivering, with a bullet through his heart. Don Carlos did not fire it, but one who was by his side, who had clung to him through all that terrible struggle, his boy friend, Archie Goodwin.

Together they pressed forward again, and the next moment reached the couch, where lay the dead General and his daughter. The followers of Don Carlos had held close behind him, completing the work that his machete carved out for them; and when they arrived at the couch at the far end of the room, there was no one alive to oppose them. They immediately began to clear the room of the dead and dying, and within a few minutes the Chief and his friend were left alone with the objects of their search. Don Carlos saw at a glance that the General was beyond all human aid. He knelt by the side of the maiden, and strove to bring her back to consciousness. Blood was flowing from

many wounds, but the beautiful face was spared disfigurement. The white arms were gashed and bleeding, but the hands still reached out dumbly, as in a last effort to find and caress her father's face.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A DASH THROUGH THE TROCHAS.

DON CARLOS lifted Emilia and bore her into outer air, where the fresh evening breeze revived her somewhat, and her white eyelids stirred with returning life. "*Gracias á Dios*,—Thank God,"—murmured the Chief, the tense lines in his face relaxing and his eyes growing moist. "Archie, my son, go find some water, and bring it quickly." Archie made all haste, and soon returned with a basin of water and a sponge. Gently, with trembling hand, the Chief bathed the blood-stained face, the gashed and bleeding arms, and smoothed back from the white brow the damp and dishevelled tresses.

It was not long before the anxious watchers were rewarded by signs of consciousness in their helpless patient. Slowly, flutteringly, the lids were lifted from the great brown eyes, which looked up wonderingly and timidly into those of the Chief, so near and above her. Emilia was at first dazed and bewildered. She looked at Don Carlos, seemingly without recognition at first, then let her eyes wander to the bandaged arms, and finally fixed her

gaze upon the countenance of the boy. She tried to move, a feeling of maidenly reserve prompting her to extricate herself from the captain's arms; but her strength was not yet equal to the effort, and with a sigh she resigned herself to the support.

"Go," said Don Carlos to his friend, "seek for one of the servants; we must resign this wounded bird to a woman's care."

His face shone with happiness, was alight with tenderness, and he was permeated with joy to find that Emilia was recovering, and that she did not shrink from him.

He felt that he could have held her thus, the fair head against his shoulder, for days and weeks, until she should have wholly recovered from the terror and wounds of that dreadful night. But again, he was sensible as well as chivalrous, and shrank from inflicting a shock to her sensitive womanliness.

When Archie finally appeared, accompanied by an old woman, one who had been the nurse of the wounded girl in her early years, and her attentive servitor during her life on the plantation, he resigned to her his precious charge, after tenderly bearing her to a room and couch in an apartment removed from the scene of slaughter. Emilia was as yet only half conscious of her surroundings, but was extremely agitated at the first by the old woman's wailings and lamentations. Don Carlos sternly bade the servant cease her cries and stifle

her grief, which she did when assured that her mistress's life yet hung by a thread, and depended upon rest and quiet.

The building was now abandoned of its late occupants, and the noise of the terrific struggle was hushed, save for a fitful firing of rifles at a distance. Very few of the attacking Spaniards had escaped to tell the tale of their surprise by the insurgents; and the latter were now busy caring for the dead and wounded.

The situation of the insurgents was precarious, for they were now in the heart of the enemy's country, a small band of less than two hundred, and four days distant from their base of supplies.

After a long consultation with his lieutenants, Don Carlos resolved to abandon the plantation as soon as the condition of Emilia would admit of it, and push on westward after the forces of Maceo. The latter, to be sure, was far distant, probably in the most remote of the provinces of Cuba, that of Pinar del Rio. To reach him the little band would have to traverse three intervening provinces, and travel a distance of perhaps six hundred miles, and all the way through the enemy's country too. Not only was it infested by the regular Spanish troops, but by roving bodies of guerillas, who knew the hiding-places of the insurgents, and were unceasing in their efforts to dislodge and pursue them. At two points, also, the island was crossed by fortified

lines of defence, called *trochas*, consisting of forts and earthworks, connected by lines of rifle-pits and swarming with Spanish soldiers.

But, though this was in the nature of a forlorn hope, yet Don Carlos could see no other way out of the predicament in which he had placed himself by this hasty raid into Puerto Principe.

It was nearly a week, however, before he felt inclined to give the order to march. During that time he had put his command into the best possible condition; he had collected food and forage, had accumulated arms and ammunition; had mounted every member of his force on a fresh horse, with a led animal for forced marches; and in every way had sought to anticipate the trials of the coming dash through the heart of the Spanish country.

Each day had witnessed a favourable progress by Emilia, until on the fifth day after the fight she was able to be removed from the room into open air. She sent for Don Carlos, and tried to express to him the gratitude she felt. What ensued at this meeting, when, through the exigencies of their terrible situation, all the artificial barriers between them had been removed, we will not seek to ascertain. It is sufficient that Emilia, now sole proprietress of the plantation, acceded to the Chief's plan for its temporary abandonment, and sanctioned his scheme for the attempt to overtake General Maceo.

Two days later, she bade farewell to the home of

her youth and the abode of her later years. Not without a struggle, not without ill-concealed attempts to be brave and self-possessed. Assisted by Don Carlos and Archie, she visited the corner of the garden where her father had been laid to rest, and there shed the last tears upon his grave. Then, with a fortitude well becoming a daughter of Cuba, she announced herself as ready to enter upon the terrible march to the westward.

As yet unable to sit in the saddle, a *litera* was provided, swung between two quiet and sure-footed mules. In this elastic cot, hung between two long poles, with a mule in front and another behind, Emilia was carried safely and securely over the rough trails and paths of the country districts. By her side rode the old nurse mounted on a donkey, and near her ever either Don Carlos or Archie, and frequently both, assiduously attentive to her every wish.

Between her and the boy a close friendship had sprung up, of which Don Carlos, had he been less liberal and noble of heart, might have well been jealous. Archie, to be sure, received many a smile and affectionate glance which Don Carlos would have given his head to obtain. But the boy, withal so precocious, was most loyal to his friend, and strove to turn everything to his account. He knew that Don Carlos loved Emilia beyond any other object in the world; he knew that she ought to love

the Chief with equal ardour. But, of course, bound as she was by so many ties of gratitude, Emilia was not going to declare her love; nor was she going to allow Don Carlos to assume that it was a thing to be had cheaply. So Archie acted as intermediary between these two, whom he hoped sometime to bring together, and, as has been said, strove to divert Emilia's attentions to the Chief.

For a few days everything went most swimmingly with the little force. No enemy appeared to obstruct their progress, the inhabitants of the region vied with each other in welcoming and supplying them with provisions, and the weather was perfect. Even the much-vaunted *trocha*, crossing the western neck of Puerto Principe province, was passed without loss, and with only a short skirmish with a few of its defenders. Thus they entered the province of Santa Clara, across which they swept in gallant array; then across Matanzas, to the province of Havana. This was the most dangerous, since it was traversed by several railroads, was very narrow between the north sea and the south, and moreover contained the rich and populous city of Havana, with its numerous forts and thousands of soldiers. They avoided the capital city, so far as possible, by hugging the south coast; but at last were brought to bay by the *trocha* line running from Havana to Batabano. This line of defence, being drawn from the chief city of Cuba to one of its important ports,

and having the benefit and support of the railroads, was almost impregnable.

Don Carlos learned that Maceo had crossed it easily, by making a feint at one point, thus drawing the Spaniards' attention, then massing his troops at another and crushing all opposition in front. But Don Carlos' band was too small for any such tactics to succeed, and so he cautiously threw out skirmishers to feel the position of the enemy. It seems that the Spaniards had been aware of his raid, rapid and secret as it was, and had been constantly accumulating men and cannon at the trocha to oppose and crush him. He could not count upon any aid from the other rebel chiefs. Maceo was now safe within the rugged ranges of Pinar del Rio; Gomez was fighting in the north of Santa Clara.

Having practically two hundred thousand men at his disposal in the island, the Spanish commander-in-chief, the cruel and relentless Weyler, had concentrated his soldiers along the trocha by the thousand and tens of thousands. The whole line was literally alive with them, the hills were bristling with Spanish cannon, and the plains glistening with hostile bayonets.

Withdrawing his force to the summit of a steep and rocky hill, Don Carlos assembled his men for a final review and harangue. It was then early morning of the twelfth day of their raid. All the men were in excellent condition; their superfluous

horses had been discarded, every ounce of unnecessary baggage thrown away ; and, in fact, the command was reduced to fighting trim and anxious for a brush with the enemy.

After the tenth day, Emilia had been able to dispense with the litter and take to the saddle. She was always surrounded by a body-guard of the picked men of the command, who worshiped her presence and vowed to die, if need be, in her defence. Near-est to her always, she had chosen to keep the young Yankee boy, who was, next to the Chief, her constant companion. And so, when Don Carlos disposed his command for defence, that last day in front of the trocha, he cautioned Archie to keep by Emilia's side and under no pretext to leave her, unless at her express command. As for him, his presence was constantly demanded at various points, for his eye had to see to every particular ; his aides were continually busy carrying out his orders.

It was towards noon of a hot and breathless day that the insurgents completed their preparations for defence. The summit of the hill had been converted into a strong fort, by piling up the rocks and felling trees, behind which the men awaited in suspense the coming of the Spaniards.

They would much rather have ranged the plains below and charged upon the assembling thousands with their machetes, but the presence of Emilia forbade any such risky procedure. It was true, the

brave girl insisted that no deviation from the Chief's plan of defence should be made on her account, and moreover, she declared her desire to wield a machete herself. As she was a superb horsewoman, and was also animated with a desire for revenge, there was no doubt that she would have accompanied the men in all their charges. But the Chief shook his head; she was to him too precious to risk in a general engagement. The safer plan would be to intrench and await the Spaniards.

Towards mid-afternoon there were evidences that the investing enemy were in motion, having the hill-top as a common centre. Like our ancestors at Bunker Hill, the patriots awaited their coming to within short range, then poured in such a fire that the Spaniards fled in confusion. They were again rallied, however, and again advanced, this time in such numbers that they overwhelmed the insurgents, despite their gallant defence.

Don Carlos had arranged that, in case of disaster, the men should take to their horses and endeavour to cut their way through the encompassing host; and this they now did — such as remained of them. He gave the signal: "*Al machete,*" and, without confusion, his men made for the horses. Don Carlos looked around for Emilia and Archie, where he had left them, in an angle of the rude fortification. They were not to be seen! In the terrible struggle between the defenders and invaders they had been

swept away. Only a moment he hesitated between his duty to his sweetheart and to his men; then, with stern face, but with a bursting heart, he marshalled his depleted force for a final dash through the Spanish lines.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A DUNGEON IN MORRO CASTLE.

BOTH Archie and Emilia were mounted, and both were awaiting the signal to put spurs to their horses and join in the charge down the hill. But, in a single instant, it seemed to them, they were swept over the parapet of the rude fort and beyond the line of fight. Fortunately, they still kept together, and they were unhurt. All around them were desperately fighting soldiers, but the pall of smoke that enveloped the hill-top favoured their escape from the thick of the battle. With encouraging words to each other they picked their way down the hill-side, and at last found themselves at its base, concealed from the Spanish force by a thick growth of trees.

They knew not whither to go, for they had no guide, and the country was strange to them; but they set their backs to the fighting and fled across the plain, blindly and alone. As the Spanish hosts covered every acre of the ground, it was only to escape from the scene of conflict to fall into the hands of a group of soldiers resting on their arms, apparently awaiting orders to join in the battle.

Archie drew his revolver and levelled it at the head of a soldier who grasped the bridle of his horse, but a word from Emilia convinced him of the folly of resistance.

"We are surrounded," she said calmly; "it is useless to resist!"

The soldiers, who composed a picket guard near the post of the general commanding, took their prisoners to headquarters, where they were questioned closely by the commanding officer. He was a man about five feet six inches in height, with a hard countenance and an air of command. He eyed the two prisoners sternly, as they were brought before him, and let his gaze dwell admiringly upon Emilia, who regarded him coldly and answered his questions without agitation.

"It is something unusual to find an educated lady amongst the insurgent ranks, señorita. To what fortunate chance do we owe this unexpected visit?"

Emilia told him, in few words, the story of their adventures.

"And this young gentleman," turning to Archie, "how is it an American is found fighting against the Spaniards? Does he not know that the Castle is full of his countrymen, who have been taken, like himself, with arms in their hands, and have earned a grave in our soil?"

The General grinned sardonically; but Archie

replied without hesitation: "My meeting with the insurgents was a matter of chance; but I have found them brave and faithful, and should like to have staid with them to the very end."

This was a rash remark, perhaps, for it seemed to irritate the General, who rejoined, "Ha! so that is it, eh? So young, and yet a rebel! Well, well, we shall see what a dungeon and perhaps a taste of the lash may do! Adjutant, take these prisoners to the station, and transfer the boy to the Morro; the lady will be admitted to parole, but only within the city walls. Begone; that is my decision."

Emilia tried to gain the General's ear a minute to intercede for her companion, but he was obdurate. "No, desist, or you too shall go the Morro. You richly deserve confinement on account of your old father's acts; for he was always arrayed against our forces. Go!"

Sadly they parted at the station, where they were assigned separate compartments on the train for Havana. Archie seized his friend's hand and pressed it to his lips, while she bent over and imprinted a kiss upon his brow. "Don't despair," she whispered, "I have powerful friends in Havana, and they will aid me in getting your release, and I shall pray for you, my boy. Keep up a brave heart. Good-bye."

To tell the truth, Archie was more rebellious

than down-hearted. "I have been in a worse fix than this, I guess," he said to the guard, "and if I ever get out, I'll make it hot for the old General.

The man laughed. "Well, my little man," he answered, "the General can take care of himself, I've no doubt. But, remember, that once inside the Morro, a prisoner never comes out except for one purpose."

"Oh, you mean to be shot?"

The guard nodded, then added, "or this,"—drawing his hand across his throat. "Yes, we are not likely to waste a charge of powder and ball on a little runt like you. Just a slash of the knife, and then over the parapet with you into the sea for the sharks to eat."

Archie saw that he was trying to frighten him, and, without giving him the satisfaction of seeing him shudder even, he turned his back and relapsed into silence for the rest of the journey.

"Dungeon forty-six," said the officer of the day, when the grim portal of the Morro having been passed, Archie was brought before him. "Not a very formidable opponent," he remarked to the guard, as the latter took his receipt for his prisoner and was about to depart. "No, he isn't very large, but he's clear grit to the back-bone."

Two soldiers seized the boy by the shoulders and hurried him down the paved court to a corridor lined with grated cells. Opening the door of

"forty-six," they thrust Archie into the dark, damp dungeon, and then tramped off without a word.

At first he imagined himself the sole occupant of the narrow cell, and began to feel along the walls to assure himself that he was alone. Only two narrow slits in the massive wall, one opening into the corridor, and the other outward to the sea (as he knew by the salt air that entered there), allowed the light to enter. As it was now night, the cell was so dark that nothing at all was visible.

Suddenly, as he was groping his way along, Archie stumbled over a living body, and a voice called out of the darkness, "Hello, what are you about? Want to kill a feller?" The boy was startled, but, after the first shock of surprise and alarm, he thrilled with joy, for he at once recognised the voice as belonging to one he had met at the Yunque, before the departure of the insurgents.

"Oh, Doctor, is it indeed you? Don't you know me, Archie Goodwin?" he cried, all in a breath, and gripping the form prostrate on the floor.

"Well, I should smile! So it's the kid, sure enough! Shake, old man, shake! How'd you get in this infernal hole, hey? Don't be afraid to speak right out, for we're all alone. Not another soul in this old sweat-box besides ourselves. Now tell me the news, for I've been here two weeks, near as I can reckon, and haven't seen another human being, sure as I'm a sinner."



Archie briefly recapitulated events since they parted, and when he was through the Doctor gave a long whistle. "So the Captain's bound for a junction with Maceo, hey? Well, he'd better keep his peepers open, for old Weyler's doing his level best this time to wipe Maceo off the earth.

"How did I get here? Well, just my usual luck, that's all. You know, I met up with my Don Carlos (the American) and Miss Hortensia, in the Indian stronghold, where they were playing royalty, if you please, and doing the high-and-mighty business to perfection.

"I saw that it couldn't last that way long, so I urged them to elope, — so to speak, — and we all lit out for the coast. The old chief of the redskins was rather disgruntled at first, at the prospect of losing their king and queen, and it took all my powers of persuasion to bring him over. And as it was, he kept casting glum looks at the queen (Miss Hortensia, you know), and handled his bows and arrows in a way I didn't like. So I said to the Major, after we had got nearly out of the woods, 'Look out for his nibs,' says I, 'for if I'm not much mistaken, he means mischief.' The Major, you know, was that gone on Miss Hortensia that he'd rather die than have anything happen to her, so he kept watch at her feet every night, while all the rest of us slept. That is, we all made believe, but it was funny to watch 'em.

"If you happened to open one of your peepers, say, in the middle of the night, you'd see half a dozen Injuns sneaking about like red ghosts, seeming to be on the lookout for a good chance to let fly one of those blamed arrows of theirs. And they can shoot, too, you just better believe.

"Well, as I was saying, the Major never slept a wink, nor pretended to either, and along towards the middle of the third night, as we were coming out of the wilderness, on the borders of Puerto Principe Province, he had his reward.

"I happened to turn over about that time, and I saw the Major nodding. He was just about worn out, that's the long and short of it. And I saw something else, too, and that was Mr. Chief sneaking up on him with a big club in his hand. I sung out, 'Wake up, Major!' and grabbed my revolver and made for the Injun, just as he was on the point of fetching our friend a clip on the head. If it had reached him, he'd never have known what hit him, but it didn't. For somehow my revolver went off about that time and the old man's arm fell to his side, and the club too. By that time the Major was wide-awake, and we got together, back to back, and stood off those howling demons, for the whole pack came down on us a-kiting, till we were stuck so full of arrows we couldn't hardly see. We managed to ward off most of 'em, but really several of 'em did hit us, and they brought blood too. Well, all this time

Miss Hortensia was cowering in her blankets — for we'd thrown all we had over her to protect her — and the Major and I were popping at the rascals in the darkness as fast as we could load and fire. To tell the truth, we didn't want to kill the poor sinners, for they didn't mean to murder us ; only they'd got the idea we were carrying off their queen, and if we'd give her up they'd go back to the mountains and leave us alone.

“ But, of course, we weren't that kind of white men, and we stayed right there till daylight, when they came to terms. About half of 'em were badly wounded, including the old chief ; but we were thankful none of 'em were killed, and we told 'em so. So, when they began to listen to reason, we convinced 'em of the folly of expecting us to give up Hortensia, and the upshot of it was, they at last agreed to haul off and let us pursue our journey unmolested. But they made a great fuss over their queen, as they called her, and each and every one of the lot fell down before her and kissed her hand before they finally left. We watched 'em out of sight, you may believe, and then we gathered up our traps and started for the north coast. Fortunately, we reached it that afternoon, just before dark, and there we found a schooner about setting sail for Florida.

“ Did we take passage in her ? Well, you may just bet we did ! And did the Major and Miss Hortensia get married the very day we set foot on shore at Key

West? Well, they did that, and I was their best man, as I told 'em I'd be, and that little girl, Juanita, was the bridesmaid. And there they are now, just as happy as clams at high water; while I am here in jail again and in a peck of trouble. Oh, I haven't told you how I got here. Well, I found a filibuster fitting out for Cuba (perhaps you've heard of her, the *Competitor*), and, as luck would have it, we were captured off Bahia Honda.

"Old Weyler was going to shoot us, but our Consul got wind of the affair and secured a stay of proceedings, and so that interesting event was postponed. But there's no knowing how soon it may come off, for the Spaniards look on us as pirates. Anyhow, we escaped with our heads for the time being; though I don't know's I'm so very thankful, after all, for life here in this dungeon, with no fresh air or daylight, and with nothing to eat but bread and water, isn't so giddy, let me tell you."

That was the Doctor's story, to which Archie listened breathlessly. He was so delighted to learn that his friends had escaped that he lost sight, for the time being, of his own troubles, and shared in the Doctor's buoyancy of spirits; particularly when the latter assured him that their Consul was working to get them free, and predicted that they would be at liberty inside forty-eight hours.

In fact, that length of time had hardly elapsed before the door of their cell was opened and they

were haled forth into daylight. An officer with seven soldiers confronted them, and read: "An order for the release of two Americans, Doctor Jonas Johnson and Master Goodwin. They are to be put on board steamer for Key West; they are to hold no communication with persons on shore, and will return to Cuba on pain of death."

"That's the talk!" cried the Doctor joyously. "They may shoot me if I ever return to this old island again. No more filibustering for me; I've had enough of it!"

CHAPTER XXX.

MACEO'S LAST BATTLE.

ALTHOUGH the Morro Castle is right across the bay from the city of Havana, and only a rifle-shot away, yet the two released Americans were not allowed to cross. They were taken in a boat to the steamer about to sail for Key West, and there closely guarded till she sailed. Archie was very much worried about the safety of Don Carlos and Emilia, and was ready to attempt to elude the vigilance of his guards and seek out the señorita in the city.

"Oh, I guess they're all right," said the Doctor reassuringly, as they reached the deck of the steamer. "Now there's a lovely lady looking at you this very minute, with her heart in her eyes, — and they're the finest eyes I ever saw, too, — and I'll bet a dollar she's either Miss Emilia or a sister of hers. There, right over on the starboard side of the hurricane deck."

"Oh, Doctor, it is — yes, it is — the señorita — Miss Emilia!" gasped the excited boy; and before any one could interpose he had darted away, and was at her side, his arm around her waist, and she was raining kisses on his upturned face.

"Well, I'm blest!" ejaculated the astonished Doctor. "If that boy isn't in luck, then nobody ever was. Just see the difference in our luck: I get all the hard knocks, lose all my cash and dental outfit; he finds a golden treasure and gets all the sweets besides."

But there was no malice in the Doctor's nature, and he said to Miss Emilia, after he had been introduced: "He's just the pluckiest little chap I ever saw, and he really deserves all he's got, I declare." And he said to Archie that afternoon, when the steamer was well out of Cuban waters, and half-way across the channel between the island and Key West: "My! but isn't she a reg'lar beauty, a real thoroughbred! So tall, so graceful, so altogether lovely! She beats Miss Hortensia, in my opinion; though as to that both are beautiful. But say, what's she doing here on board the steamer all alone?"

Archie then told his friend of her history, and hinted that he had hoped she and Don Carlos might have a mutual affection that would be consummated by their marriage. Then he shook his head sadly, and added: "But that's all over now, I'm afraid, for the chances are that Carlos was either killed or taken prisoner; and if taken he was immediately shot, like all the rest."

"Oh, no, perhaps not," answered the Doctor, wishing to cheer him up. "But say, isn't that a sail over there? Yes, and the lookout aloft has seen it,

and the steamer's slowing up. It's a small boat, with half a dozen men in it; guess it's a Cuban refugee from down the coast." They leaned over the rail and saw the ladder lowered, and the men climb quickly up the side of the ship, leaving their little craft to drift away. As the last man leaped over the rail Archie gave a great shout: "Why, it's Don Carlos!" he exclaimed joyfully; and in another moment the two were locked in each other's arms.

"Emilia?" demanded Don Carlos. "Is she here? Did she escape? Oh, don't tell me she did not, for I will return and search for her."

For answer, Archie led his friend to the main saloon, where, wearily leaning her head on her hand and weeping, sat the object of their solicitude; and —

"Well, young man," said the Doctor to Archie, about half an hour later, "I fancy you haven't any more doubts now about their 'mutual affection'! It seems to me that when a young lady leaps up and cries out, 'Oh, Carlos, then you *are* living!' and then falls into his arms in a faint, there isn't much danger but that she loves him a little. And I'll bet a dollar there'll be a wedding within a week; and what's more, my boy, you and I will be on hand at the ceremony."

A little group gathered in the cabin that evening to hear Don Carlos relate what happened to him



after Emilia and Archie had disappeared, when he made his dash for the Trocha. On every face was joy and content, yet now and then a cloud swept over them at the thought of what had so recently occurred to temper their rejoicing. For Don Carlos had brought them the tidings of Maceo's death. Yes, the gallant General had fallen, bravely fighting at the head of his troops, the last of his noble family to perish in the cause of Cuban liberty. But we will let Don Carlos tell the sad story.

"Finding you had disappeared," said he, turning to Emilia and Archie, "I was almost in despair. But I could not search for you, as you know. My men claimed me to lead them to the charge. They, like myself, were animated with a desire to avenge your capture or death,—for we knew it must be one or the other,—and our fury was such that the Spaniards scattered before us like chaff before the wind. But we only dispersed one body of the enemy to find ourselves confronted by another, and my brave comrades were falling around me on every side. I was about to draw off at last, when a messenger arrived with the tidings that General Maceo had heard the noise of conflict, and was then on his way to assist me. Soon after he arrived, and we consulted together on the little hill where we had been intrenched. I was frantic with the belief that you were lost to me, and wished to continue the battle until the foe were either beaten or we had been

exterminated. Maceo agreed with me, that we could soon drive the enemy away if they were not reinforced, and we were forming our men for another charge when a flag of truce appeared. The messenger was admitted, and then our General was told that the Spaniards desired to confer with him alone. The Spanish commander guaranteed safe passage for him and his staff, if he would meet him at a point within the trocha, but without the main body of his troops.

“Maceo, as you know, was the soul of honour, brave to rashness, but gentle as a child. His own experience in two wars should have taught him better; but he chose to believe in his opponent's good faith, and agreed to meet him. I tried to dissuade him from it, pointing out the many occasions when we had been betrayed by the Spaniards, even under flags of truce. But he had given his word, and soon the firing was ordered suspended, and, accompanied only by his chosen staff of field officers, he set off, — as it proved, to his death.

“He wished me to remain and take charge of his force until he returned; but I would not desert him, even though I felt he was surely going to his death. He had come to my rescue; it would have been cowardice on my part to desert him then. So we set off, merely a handful of officers, to meet the Spanish General.

“We passed the trocha in safety, orders having

been given to allow us free passage, and after a short march reached the appointed place of rendezvous. Even then, while on the march, I tried to turn him back ; but he would not hear to me. Alas, it was not long before he received sad confirmation of my suspicions ! We were admitted into the center of a body of armed troops, scattered about in the underbrush so as not to excite suspicion by their numbers, but so numerous that even Maceo's trustful nature awoke to the danger of the situation.

"The Spanish General (let him be nameless here, for vengeance will soon o'ertake him) met us, as agreed, but after a few minutes' conversation, he suddenly fell back and gave a sign to the ambushed soldiers. Watching as I was for some token of treachery, I saw the sign, and shouted to my General. At the same time I dashed upon the base Spaniard, to cut him down with my machete. But it was then too late. A sudden volley leaped out of the bushes, and nearly all our little band fell dead or mortally wounded. Maceo himself was struck by several bullets, but he managed to turn his horse and emerge a little way from that circle of death, then reeled in his saddle and fell to the ground. The assassins were upon him almost before he had touched the earth, hacking him with their machetes and tearing off his clothing, as proofs of their success, to take to General Weyler.

"In their desire to secure this proof of their mur-

derous deed, the cutthroat soldiers for a moment lost sight of those of us who had escaped the first volley, and I had almost reached and cut down the officer in charge, when some of the reserve assassins arrived. Seeing, then, that we were outnumbered as well as betrayed, and having full assurance that our General had met his death, I dashed through and over the surrounding soldiers and got away into the fields, with only a bullet in my arm to remind me of that treacherous attempt upon our lives."

"Oh, Carlos, are you indeed wounded?" said Emilia, with intense anxiety depicted in her face. "Tell me are you still suffering!"

"Only a small affair, my sweetheart. Gladly would I have given both arms, and even my poor life, to have saved our brave General. But it was not to be. I alone escaped that fiery vortex of hell; or if others escaped, I do not know of it. All that day and the next night I wandered aimlessly, yet with a general direction toward the coast, and the second morning my good horse brought me out at the port of Cabanas, north of Bahia Honda. Here I found those who were rescued with me in the boat, about launching their little skiff upon the waves. The rest you know. After a few hours at sea we were sighted by your steamer, and that ends my story of adventure, so far as I was concerned. You may think it strange that I did not seek out our troops; in truth, I did try to do so; but they had

changed their base after our departure, and my search was fruitless."

Don Carlos paused, and for a moment's space there was deep silence. Then, from the circle of his auditors, there breathed forth a wild demand for vengeance upon those base violators of a flag of truce, who had accomplished by this deed of treachery what their best Generals and their picked soldiers had failed to do in many months of open battle, — the death of Cuba's bravest and most gallant General.

"God will reward the Spanish as they deserve," said Emilia. "Baseness and treachery never prevail against a just cause; nor, indeed, in any cause. Our Maceo will be of greater aid to the cause of *Cuba libre*, now that he is dead, than he could have been, even with all his talents, living and fighting our enemies. He is a martyr to liberty, and the whole world will despise the Spaniards for hiring assassins to do what their soldiers could not openly do in the field."

"That's the living truth," said the Doctor, bringing his clenched fist down upon the cabin table. "And, by the Eternal, if I had the means, I'd fit out a filibuster every month for the assistance of those gallant insurgents fighting over there, in the island we have just left behind us. In other words, if our Government hasn't the backbone to assist those people struggling for freedom, right on our very

coast, then let our own people take a hand in the game!"

"I wish I could help," said Archie. "But my only possession was poor 'Chiquito,' and I had to leave him behind when the Spaniards took me off to the Morro."

"You are worth more than you think," declared the Doctor. "Just you wait till to-morrow, and I'll take you at your word."

When the morrow came, and they entered the harbor of Key West, they saw three familiar figures standing on the dock. One was that of a strikingly handsome woman, the other of a tall, soldierly-appearing man, and the last, of an absent-minded old gentleman.

"Hortensia, the Major, and the Professor!" exclaimed Archie. "Now our family will be complete!"

And indeed it was, and it is to-day; for after Emilia and Don Carlos were married, they, as well as Hortensia and the Major, insisted that the Doctor, Archie and the Professor should share the home which the two happy couples jointly bought and furnished together. The meaning of the Doctor's words was fully shown when the Professor produced a check for eighty thousand dollars, which he had received from the museum that had purchased the Cacique's treasure.

As neither Archie nor his friends, Don Carlos and the Major, would accept it solely, it was decided to

make it the nucleus of a "filibuster fund," and perhaps our readers have heard of the outfitting colony which they established at Indian Key.

At all events, the papers of late have been full of the doings of a trim little schooner, filled with arms, ammunition, and medical stores, which has repeatedly run the blockade off the Cuban coasts, and cheered the hearts of the insurgents mightily. It was their own venture, and as it was fitted out with funds furnished by the Cacique's treasure : thus had time at last avenged the poor Indians of Cuba !

THE END.